

University of Dundee

## DOCTOR OF COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Evaluation that Empowers

An iterative investigation of how organisations can become evaluation-minded

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# Evaluation that Empowers

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An iterative investigation of how  
organisations can become evaluation-minded

Professional Doctorate – DCLD

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**University of Dundee, May 2016**

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I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the people and organisations that have willingly given their time and expertise through their participation in this study.

## Declaration

I, Lesley Greenaway, am the sole author of this thesis; that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me; that the work of which the thesis is a record has been done by me, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Signature:

### Statement

I confirm that the conditions of the relevant Ordinance and Regulations have been fulfilled.

Signature:

## Abstract

This research grew out of my concern that the dominant discourse about evaluation in the UK limits how it is defined, recognised and practised. It is a discourse which primarily values performance, accountability, results and value for money. In this research, 'Evaluation that Empowers' (EtE) aims to present a different discourse about evaluation that recognises other voices within the evaluation mix. This perspective embraces a broader definition of evaluation where: learning and development are a priority, and where the roles of evaluator and participants are collaborative and mutually recognised.

The purpose of this research was to explore, develop, test and refine the EtE theoretical model against the real-life evaluation experience and practice in organisations. The EtE Model develops the notion of 'evaluation-mindedness' as the capacity for an organisation to create a deep and sustainable change in how it thinks about and embeds evaluation practices into its day to day actions. The research used a theory building approach over four distinct iterative studies. The literature review provided a guiding framework for future empirical studies; the EtE Model was applied and refined in the context of a single longitudinal case study; and further literature provided a critical review of the EtE Model in relation to current Evaluation Capacity Building literature. Finally, the EtE Model was developed into an evaluative conversation (The EtE Toolkit) and was field tested in two organisations. Findings suggest that organisations benefited from staff and volunteers engaging in critical discussion and self-assessment of their evaluation practices. For one organisation, the EtE conversation highlighted broader organisational issues, another organisation planned to adapt the EtE process to support self-evaluation across its service teams, and for one participant an emerging story of professional development was generated.

This research has made an original contribution to the theory and practice of evaluation by developing a model and toolkit for engaging key evaluation

stakeholders in a process of critical review of evaluation policy and practice or a meta-evaluation of evaluation. It has explored and developed the concept of evaluation-mindedness which can be applied to organisations, teams and individuals.

# Introduction

This introduction is an overview of my research thesis, provides a background to my experience and a rationale for my research topic – evaluation that empowers. It highlights the research aims, and goes on to outline my methodological approach, how I have used reflection as a key strand for aiding critical thought and personal and professional development, and addresses ethical concerns for the study. The structure of the thesis is introduced and the section finishes with an opening reflection. A challenge for me in completing this thesis was to find an appropriate structure that would meet the scholarly requirements for a doctoral thesis and be true to the nature of my study. Carter, Kelly and Brailsford (2012) provide helpful guidance for creating cohesion when bringing together a series of separate documents to ‘generate a narrative’. They emphasise two distinct ‘readerly’ needs to be considered: you as the writer and the examiner as the reader. This introduces a subtle shift in perspective where the researcher moves from the consuming self-interest of “the author perspective (what do I need to say?) to the reader perspective (what is it my reader will understand from this?)” (p. 76). With this in mind I have structured my thesis to reflect the iterative nature of my study and my development and growth as a doctoral researcher. The final act of bringing cohesion to my work has been deeply satisfying and exciting to see the narrative fit together. I have aspired to Carter et al.’s guidance to create a thesis that communicates new knowledge and understanding, demonstrates scholarly research skills and process, and as an act of self-fashioning creates the academic person that I am comfortable to be. This is my work, please enjoy.

## Context and rationale

I am an experienced researcher, facilitator and trainer with a focus on developing evaluation projects, and building capacity in evaluation and research. My knowledge and skills have been developed over twenty-five years of working in voluntary and community organisations in Scotland where I now work as an

independent evaluator and training consultant. My interest in evaluation started about 20 years ago when I stood in for a colleague leading a training course on monitoring and evaluation. Right from the outset I struggled with the confusing and ambiguous language of evaluation, but I was struck by the notion that evaluation was not just about counting, measuring and making judgments. Used in a particular way evaluation could be energising and become a means of building organisational capacity, skills and confidence. Evaluation could also be used to recognise the important contributions that organisations and individuals make across a number of social settings such as health, community and education. My current perspective on evaluation is based on the belief that:

- people (practitioners, volunteers and service users<sup>1</sup>) should have opportunities to contribute, participate, be heard and become active players in the evaluation process;
- the evaluator can embrace a role which facilitates the evaluation process and uses skills and knowledge to create a robust and authentic evaluation framework;
- organisations and individuals can become evaluation-minded as they develop their skills and expertise to drive the evaluation process from within.

What concerns me as I go about my work as an evaluator working with Third Sector<sup>2</sup> Organisations is that there seems to be a dominant story or discourse about evaluation that determines how it is defined, recognised and practised. This is a story that values accountability, measurement and evidence. It reflects a particular power relationship where evaluation decisions are driven by funding, accountability and the needs and interests of the funder. I am concerned that, whilst some organisations can respond to these accountability demands, there are other organisations that want to engage with evaluation practices; want to show the difference they make; and want to improve their services but do not necessarily have the skills, expertise or resources to do so. There is a real risk that these

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<sup>1</sup> Service users is the term used in this thesis to refer to the people who access an organisation's activities and programmes. This is not an ideal term as it conveys a sense of passive involvement as opposed to active participation.

<sup>2</sup> Third Sector Organisations are defined to include voluntary, community organisations and social enterprises. (Ellis & Gregory, 2008).



organisations may be excluded from the evaluation debate and be disadvantaged in their access to funding. In this context, it seems to me that there are some missing stories or discourses about evaluation that need to be acknowledged as legitimate and relevant pathways for defining evaluation, not least because these evaluation stories shift the power relationships so that organisations can drive their own evaluation decisions and interests.

## Definitions

At this point it is perhaps helpful to set out some key definitions in the context of this research.

Firstly, *evaluation* as a concept is commonly defined as the routine and systematic collection of data where evidence is used to make judgements and determine value or worth of something such as a programme, a project, a process and/or a product (Ellis, 2005). In this research I understand evaluation as a concept which goes beyond this definition. I understand evaluation as a framework:

- for facilitating the collection of evidence of impact and change upon which judgements of value and worth can be made;
- for facilitating learning, development and improvement for organisations, groups and individuals. Learning is a direct result of the feedback from evaluation, and from the evaluation skills and knowledge gained;
- for empowering or giving a greater voice and confidence for those involved to act on and use the results and learning from their evaluations;
- for creating the environment for increased engagement, collaboration and democratic dialogue.

In this definition, evaluation is both a means and an end. Results are important but consideration of evaluation process is also given priority where evaluation process provides the underpinning foundations for generating relevant and meaningful results for 'evaluation use'. This definition of evaluation is further explored and developed through the literature review in Study 1.

Secondly, the concept of *organisational learning* in the context of my research is defined as the intentional use of learning processes which enable organisations to

proactively engage with and respond to the changing contexts in which they operate (Torres and Preskill, 2001; Hoole and Patterson, 2008). These contexts of change include, for example, changing political and policy environments, changes in funding priorities, changes in local issues and needs, and internal organisational change such as financial and staff changes. As well as providing a process for engaging with change, organisational learning is seen as developmental in that it creates a culture where stakeholder feedback is sought for and critical processes of review and reflection inform and guide organisational development. Organisational learning creates the space where stakeholders can have their say, can learn about and can influence the direction of an organisation.

Organisational learning and evaluation are linked in that evaluation becomes integrated into an organisation's activities and infrastructure as a tool for informing organisational development, improvement and change, and for engaging stakeholders (external and internal) in a critical dialogue. In this research, the theme of organisational learning emerges as a guiding feature of the 'evaluation-minded' organisation, and is developed through the EtE Model and its defining themes.

## **Iterative process and research aims**

My research has used an iterative process where each study is informed by and builds on the learning from the previous study. This approach provided opportunities to revisit themes, to refine and develop my research model and to develop a broad range of research skills. This is a theory-building approach as opposed to a theory-proving approach. Using iterations creates a dialectic process between the influences of theory and the empirical application of ideas in action. Iterative cycles are linked through critical review, evaluation and a redefining of ideas and questions to inform and shape the next iteration. In this research iterations have been used at a number of levels: as an overall research strategy; as an iteration from the first broader literature review (Study 1) to a second and more focused literature review (Study 3); through the different iterations of the EtE Model (v1, v2, v3) and the subsequent EtE website and Toolkit (v1, v2).

The starting point for my research was to examine approaches to evaluation that validate and recognise experience and performance in ways that are relevant and useful for individuals, for organisations, and for communities. As an iterative study new aims were informed from learning as the study progressed. The aims of the research developed from my initial ideas through a set of four studies which make up the sequence for my thesis. In the end, the research explored, tested and refined the EtE Model against the real-life evaluation experience and practice in organisations. The specific aims of each study are described below.

### **Study 1 Review of evaluation approaches that empower individuals, organisations and communities**

The literature review aimed to map evaluation approaches that empower individuals, organisations and communities and to provide an orienting framework for future empirical studies. The review explored the factors and dilemmas that shape the direction of evaluation in Third Sector Organisations in the UK, how individuals, organisations and communities are empowered through their participation in evaluation and how evaluation could be a tool for recognising and hearing the voices of individuals, organisations and communities. The review concluded by identifying potential indicators for evaluation that empowers.

### **Study 2 Exploring and refining the Evaluation that Empowers model based on a retrospective analysis of evaluation practice**

This study aimed to explore, test and refine the EtE Model (v1) and indicators identified from the literature review, against the real-life evaluation experience and practices in one organisation. Key objectives of this study were to learn about the EtE Model when it was used in relation to evaluation practice; to map evaluation practices of the organisation onto the EtE Model and to determine how participatory evaluation practices were for different stakeholders. The study concluded by identifying ways to refine the EtE Model (v2).

### **Study 3 Wider context and alignment of Evaluation that Empowers in relation to similar evaluation models**

The aim of this study was to position EtE in relation to similar evaluation models and specifically Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) models from the USA and impact measurement approaches from the UK. The study explores the similarities and differences between these approaches and highlights issues and considerations for the EtE Model's field testing phase and adds further refinement to the model (v3).

### **Study 4 Evaluation that Empowers in Action**

The final phase of my research involved developing a set of practical materials or toolkit based on the EtE Model and field testing the EtE Toolkit in a range of organisations. This involved a two-stage research process:

- **Study 4a Developing the EtE Toolkit (v1)**

The overall aim of this stage was to develop and refine a prototype website and tools based on the EtE Model. The objectives were: to design a prototype EtE website and practical conversation tool (v1); to consult a focus group of practitioners on the prototype design and usability; to improve the prototype based on practitioner feedback and to prepare the EtE Toolkit (v2) for field testing in organisations.

- **Study 4b Field Testing the EtE Toolkit (v2)**

The overall aim of this stage was to field test the EtE Toolkit within a range of organisations. A primary focus was to explore the lived experiences of these organisations within their respective contexts. The study involved evaluating the usability of the EtE Toolkit v2 from the perspective of different organisational settings; identifying how these organisations used the EtE Toolkit to make changes to their evaluation practices; exploring how the EtE Model influences the evaluation discourse within these organisations and finally to identify further refinements to the toolkit (v3).

## Methodological approach to evaluation

My approach to evaluation is firmly based in a constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) where there is an emphasis on evaluation which is responsive to the needs and interests of wider stakeholder groups. It changes stakeholders from objects of evaluation to participants, and opens up greater potential for participants as knowledge generators. Beyond this, participatory evaluation (Reason, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997) develops the role of stakeholder participants further in the processes of evaluation. In this discourse the evaluator and the evaluation participants become partners in a collaborative inquiry. There is an expectation that evaluation will be useful and used as a means for influencing social change, developing skills and capacity or for improving organisational practise (Patton, 1997; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

EtE focuses on evaluation approaches and methods and draws attention to the parallel between research methodology and evaluation methodology. Research is seen as the construction of knowledge based on how reality is viewed; the relationship between the researcher and research participants; and the design and use of appropriate methods for knowing. Evaluation can also be seen as an approach to the construction of knowledge and can be defined using these same aspects providing a parallel lens for viewing research and evaluation. These aspects are responded to differently by different paradigms or worldviews. It is important to set the terms for different paradigms alongside each other in order to position my research practice and to clarify the epistemological position of this research. This comparison of different paradigms is transferable to different evaluation approaches and is particularly relevant for arguing the case for a participatory evaluation approach within a context where more positivist evaluation approaches remain influential (Harlock, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (2000) provide a helpful comparison across competing research paradigms, which is extended by Heron and Reason (1997) to include a participatory research paradigm. In Table 1 I have used their comparison across the positivist and constructivist paradigms to highlight substantial differences. It is clear that these two contrasting paradigms reflect

different commitments. For example: the commitment to ‘truth’ from a positivist perspective is achieved through the systematic and controlled collection of objective facts. Whereas, for the constructivist perspective ‘truth’ is subjectively related to the people and context of a particular situation, and there is an expectation that ‘truth’ changes for different people, in different situations and at different times. Table 1 extends this comparison to show how the approach taken in the EtE research study relates to the constructivist paradigm.

However, this positioning of positivist and constructivist paradigms as oppositional does not account for the space between them. It is perhaps more helpful to consider positivist and constructivist as the opposite ends of a spectrum and to recognise that research methodology can use a more mixed approach depending on the research needs. For example, in utilisation-focused evaluation Patton (1997) does not see a problem with mixing paradigms, he is more concerned with the relevant application and use of evaluation and evaluation methods. In my research, this more mixed paradigm approach is most evident in the research design of the empirical Studies 2 and 4b in terms of epistemology and through the level of participant involvement. In Study 2, the case study organisation contributed in identifying documents, but the data were systematically analysed using documentary analysis. Findings were derived from and interpreted through researcher analysis. In Study 4b, there was more evidence of case study participants engaged in ways that shaped the research within their own contexts. For example, case study organisations independently used the EtE Toolkit within their identified teams which created rich and varied qualitative data contextualised to each case study. It is interesting that within my research there seems to be two distinct applications for paradigm considerations firstly, in how I have applied the more ‘utilisation-focused’ mixed approach to design appropriate methods for each study. A second application is in how I have aimed to apply the values of the constructivist end of the spectrum in the design of the EtE Model and Toolkit for example by embedding concepts of participation and collaboration within context specific situations. The theory that guides this study and that is used to explore and

understand Evaluation that Empowers is developed more fully within the literature review presented as Study 1.

**Table 1 Positivist and constructivist paradigms related to this research study**

Research lens	Positivist paradigm	Constructivist paradigm	EtE study
Inquiry aim	Explanation, prediction, control	Understanding, reconstruction of knowledge	Exploratory, learning, development and reconstruction
Nature of reality: (Ontology)	Verified hypothesis, and existence of an objective reality.	Reality is subjective, based on shared meanings in any given time and context.	Reality is subjective, critical through reflection and reflexivity, to identify meanings within different participant contexts.
Nature of knowing: (Epistemology)	Findings are presented as objective, factual 'truths'.	Findings are co-created through experiential, propositional, practical knowing and represent 'truths' for each specific context and community of inquiry – situational truths.	Findings are co-created through critical reflection and dialogue and are based on 'truths' as perceived by research participants within their individual, group and organisational contexts.
Methodological approach: (Methodology)	Experimental and quantitative methods seek to verify hypothesis.	Political and practical participation in collaborative inquiry are grounded in shared experiential context.	Inquiry based on researcher-participant collaboration. Use of qualitative case study and narrative reflecting participant experience. Iterative research process builds on experiential learning.
Values and beliefs: (Axiology)	Propositional knowing about the world is an end in itself.	Process of practical inquiry is an end in itself as a source of human flourishing and empowerment within community of inquiry.	Evaluation process leads to empowerment. Participants as evaluation partners. Researcher/evaluator as facilitator.

Based on Heron and Reason (1997, p15)

A major challenge for the researcher aspiring to operate within this constructivist paradigm is the challenge of validity or in other words – why should we believe it? The notion of situated 'truths' reveals at least two narratives: the narrative that the participants tell and the constructed narrative of the researcher (Riessman, 2008). Research participants report on particular circumstances in a particular context at a

particular time. Whilst this may be 'true' at the moment of report it is problematic in that it changes over time and participants may no longer agree to a historical record representing them. The researcher has different commitments. Their 'truths' are situated within their research purposes: the practical, strategic, cultural and political application. Riessman (2008) emphasises the importance of 'trustworthiness' in the researcher's responsibility to document the methods and questions used and the way that data are recorded, collated, analysed and reported, so that the validity or trustworthiness of any research project within this constructivist paradigm can be individually judged. In this research study, I have aspired to Riessman's idea of trustworthiness through documenting the different methodological approaches used within each study, and in Study 4b I have reported the organisational narratives and an individual narrative as well as addressing the study objectives. Another methodological process which Reissman recommends is the use of reflexivity as a critical tool for positioning the researcher within their research. Developing a reflective and reflexive approach to research methodology is taken up in the next section.

## Using reflection and reflexivity in qualitative research

My voice as a researcher and how I position myself as a researcher within my study is important when I am exploring themes of empowerment and how evaluation plays a role in giving 'voice' to individuals and organisations. This acknowledgement of the relationship between the researcher and participants raises questions about the nature of the relationship and creates challenges in terms of how the relationship is made explicit and transparent within the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Etherington, 2007). For example, where research participants' role and voice are set collaboratively alongside the role and voice of the researcher there is a need for a mutual exploring of expectations as a way to appreciate fully any ethical concerns that may arise through collaborative relationships such as boundary setting and confidentiality. Etherington (2007) alerts us to these subjective relationships as an ethical concern of the qualitative researcher, especially when there are previous relationships between the researcher and the research



participants. An additional concern is to provide an honest account of research to enable audiences to make their own subjective decisions about how best to judge the research. The use of reflexivity as *“thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the inter-subjective dynamics between researcher and researched”* (Finlay, 2002, p. ix) provides a tool for developing the self-critical voice and is a means of bringing out into the open the challenges and dilemmas faced by the qualitative researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Etherington, 2007).

The notion of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983) has become recognised as good practice within the health, education and community professions (Ghaye, Gillespie, & Lillyman, 2000; Smith, 2006) and is an approach used particularly within qualitative research (Finlay, 2002). Researchers keep a reflective journal to map out their research journey, identifying key moments and tracking change and development over time. Reflexivity goes a stage further identifying different filters and lenses for critically reviewing the researcher/participant relationships in a research project. Guidance on what these filters and lenses are is provided by Ahern (1999), Etherington (2004) and Lincoln & Guba, (2000) using questions to help structure the reflexive process. They identify filters such as: personal history and interest in the topic; personal value systems; gender; social class; ethnicity and/or culture influences, and are particularly interested in how different power relations influence the researcher and the research participants. Hertz (1997) points out how these filters operate in practice as the researcher decides which accounts to use and which to leave out. These filters are not only of concern in relation to the research participants and the research data, but also operate in relation to for example the selection and choice of literature sources. Giving attention to these filters brings a sharper focus to what is the crux for the qualitative researcher namely: what is the relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the data that are created? (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Etherington, 2007). The question about locating the power relationships within the research is particularly relevant where I am interested in empowerment and the relationships within the evaluation process.

Reflexivity is not without its challenges. For example, Finlay (2003) highlights how reflexivity can be used differently as introspection, peer critique or collaboration depending on different research frameworks. Hertz (1997) is also concerned with how reflexive processes can involve deeper personal honesty from both participants and researcher which need to be considered ethically in terms of confidentiality, and in terms of public message. A further challenge lies in how individual researchers use reflexivity in practice and find ways to use their reflexive voice within their writing. Ahern (1999) has described the use of 'reflexive bracketing' where the researcher uses critical questioning alongside the research process to identify and acknowledge their personal influences. This parallel process enables the researcher to separate out or 'bracket' these influencing factors as a way to show explicitly how they have influenced the research. Finlay (2002) and McArdle & Mansfield (2007) have used a 'biographical box' to situate the researcher's background at the start of a paper, and provide a critical dialogue on the issues and challenges of the research as a parallel story or 'meta-reflexive voice'. Within this study I have used a research diary to examine critically personal influencing factors at different stages, and to track my personal learning journey as I develop as a doctoral researcher. An initial reflection or 'biographical box' is included as an opening reflection at the end of this section, in Study 3 and as a closing reflection. In addition, I have built in process reviews with research participants to reflect on their experiences of participation in Study 2 and Study 4b.

## Ethical considerations

The main ethical consideration for this study was protecting the confidentiality and supporting the participation of organisations and individuals, especially when working with a small number of in-depth case studies. Stake (2003) highlights the privileged position of the qualitative researcher when he says: "*Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world – their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict*" (p. 154). He goes on to assert that it is important that researchers go beyond standard ethics requirements and to exercise great caution to minimise risk by, for example maintaining an active dialogue with

the research participants, providing feedback, and in particular for the researcher *“to listen well for signs of concern”* (p. 154). The iterative nature of the research design meant that participants involved across each of the studies were involved at different stages, and that they had different roles and different levels of participation. For example: in Study 2, the single case study organisation played a significant role in opening up its evaluation reports and materials for documentary analysis. They were also consulted to review the findings and to provide feedback for developing the EtE Model. In Study 3 an evaluation ‘expert’ was consulted to check and review the validity, relevance and application of the EtE Model. In Study 4a, evaluation practitioners provided a critical review and feedback on the EtE prototype website and toolkit. Participants in these studies played active roles in the creation and design of the EtE Model and the EtE Toolkit. They helped to prepare the ground for the field testing phase. In Study 4b the organisations and individuals were involved in testing the EtE Toolkit for real in their organisations. The organisations piloted the toolkit in real situations, in real teams, in real contexts with real consequences. Whilst I as the researcher had choreographed the design and development of the EtE Model and toolkit, the real test (Study 4b) was put into the hands of the organisations for them to use the EtE Toolkit and to reflect on the impact and change that their participation had triggered. It is not surprising that this final study generated substantial data about individual, organisational and team experience.

Enabling, supporting and protecting participation in this whole study was facilitated by engaging with organisations and individuals in ways that aspired to keep their choice to participate conscious, live and active. Specifically, in Study 2, the organisation was encouraged to decide which documents it wanted to represent its evaluation practice, and in Study 4b participating organisations facilitated their own EtE conversations, so using the toolkit to decide the themes and questions that were most relevant to their context, needs and interests. The toolkit was designed as a self-reliant resource and the research study was designed to test the toolkit on the organisation’s terms. In addition, the study involved early discussions with prospective research participants, providing detailed written information about the

research project, responding to questions raised by the individual and/or organisation participants, seeking and ongoing checking of permissions to use the materials and findings, and to provide feedback on the research findings to the organisation and how they are represented within the research. This attention to the negotiation of research relationships is consistent with Etherington's (2007) emphasis on creating "*ethical relational research*" (p. 599) through the use of reflexivity. Confidentiality was addressed by describing the organisations using generic terms, and by referring to individuals using a coding system. This generic approach enabled me to raise and discuss critical aspects in a more open way without harm to or exposure of the individual or the organisation. All data collected were stored electronically on a secure computer including digital recordings. The separate studies were each approved by the University of Dundee Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from all research participants. Further, details relating to research ethics will be provided in each study.

## Thesis structure

The thesis is split into four distinct studies. It tells the story or sequence of four related studies and how the learning from one informed the questions and design for the next. Study 1 is a literature review which explores the context for and the concept of evaluation that is empowering. It maps out a specific set of developments and literature leading to the identification of a number of key factors that can be seen as contributing to and defining evaluation that empowers. In Study 2 these ingredients are explored through a single case study focusing on an organisation's evaluation practices at three points over a five-year period. This scrutiny was used to inform further development of the EtE Model. Study 3 explores additional literature related to evaluation capacity building and critiques the EtE Model in relation to specific Evaluation Capacity Building models. Study 4 shows how the EtE Model was developed into a practical toolkit and field tested in organisations. This involved two stages, firstly creating a prototype toolkit and testing it with a sample user group and secondly, field testing the toolkit within two distinct organisations. In the conclusions I consider the policy and practice

implications for this research and how it has made a contribution to the field of evaluation. Table 2 provides an overview showing the four linked research studies and their respective methodologies.

**Table 2 Summary of thesis structure**

Study sequence		Method
Study 1	Evaluation that Empowers – A review of evaluation approaches that empower individuals, organisations and communities	Literature review (1)
Study 2	Exploring and refining the Evaluation that Empowers model based on a retrospective analysis of evaluation practice	Single case study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Documentary analysis</li> <li>- Focus group</li> </ul>
Study 3	Wider context and alignment of Evaluation that Empowers in relation to similar evaluation models	Literature review (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expert interview</li> </ul>
Study 4a	Evaluation that Empowers in Action – Developing the EtE Toolkit	Prototyping of the EtE Toolkit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prototype development</li> <li>- focus group</li> </ul>
4b	Evaluation that Empowers in Action – Field testing the EtE Toolkit	Field testing in two organisations using case study approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- focus groups</li> <li>- narrative analysis</li> </ul>

## Opening reflection – My research journey begins ...

During the course of my studies I have made various recordings as part of my reflexive process. I saw this as a way to understand more about the nature of my research journey and how it developed and changed over time. I was also aware that the nature of my research needed me to pay attention to myself as researcher within my research and how I influenced it and how it influenced my practice. The questions that I wanted to explore through my recordings were: What kind of journey has this been? How has the journey influenced my research and how have I influenced my research? The following section draws on the recordings that I made during the first six months of my doctoral studies. I came back to these recordings when creating my draft thesis to seek insights to these questions. In this first reflection I have used an extract from my diaries and used an analysis approach based on the Listening Guide (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008) to provide an interpretation. This analysis uses a number of readings to identify context, relationships and the voice of 'I' reflecting how I perceived myself within the situation. In this reflection I have focused on the voice of 'I' in the context of the start of my doctoral journey.

*It is the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 and day 1 of my doctoral studies – something should happen!*

This is a narrative about the journey from a new doctoral student full of excitement and optimism about new challenges ahead yet uncertain about where to begin. From my recordings in retrospect there are two clear themes emerging. The first is a balancing act between the priorities of work and study. This is both a struggle about finding the right time and focus to progress my studies, and an asset as I discover that work and study are mutually beneficial. For example, my reading about theory and methodology informs my practical evaluation projects, and helps me to understand, design and report evaluations with more confidence and authority. Conversely my evaluation projects are in the real world and create opportunities to test and critique theoretical ideas. This two-way exchange between research study and evaluation practice are a continuing theme throughout my recordings. A second theme is perhaps more characteristic of the new doctoral

researcher and that is the recurring tension between enthusiasm and uncertainty. It causes a healthy need to question, check and wonder.

### Getting started

01/09/2009

*I am like a detective, investigating, discovering, making links and connections, and every now and then*

*I find a gem of knowledge or  
a key to my study*

*I seem to be finding and  
collecting but at some point*

*I need to do something with it  
all*

*I need new skills which also  
bring new challenges, self-  
doubts, personal gaps and  
weaknesses*

*I have no previous experience in this*

*I feel deskilled*

*I read very slowly and struggle with meaning and then forget the content*

*I am playing at being a student and all this involves – and loving it!*

*I meet other students, peers, exchanging ideas, resources, support*

*I meet my supervisors*

*I have a plan and a pathway*

*I can begin.*



**Figure 1 Reflective journal – I am like a detective, investigating, discovering, making links**

## **Grappling with what it is to be a doctoral researcher**

01/12/2009

*I have been grappling with it all – what is being asked for? having to work things out for myself?*

*Critical discussion about my subject – opened a window*

*What is critical discussion? Especially when you are excited by new ideas and new reading? How do you 'see' the critique? But ...*

*I feel quite comfortable critiquing topics that I am familiar with*

*I am attracted to the idea of reflexivity*

*Is this something that I can develop within my evaluation projects (work)?*

*Does it relate to how I include participants as co-researchers?*

*Power and empowerment – what are power relations in my research? In my work?*

*What are the benefits and outcomes for participants?*

*Whose agenda is it?*

*Is this what becoming a doctoral researcher involves – realigning yourself to thinking differently?*

## **Reflective Practice ⇔ Reflexive Practice**

I adopted reflective practice skills and processes to enhance my critical learning and development early on in my professional career. I have also adapted the notion of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983; Moon, 2000) to build review processes into practical evaluation projects with individuals and groups. This draws extensively on active reviewing techniques developed by Greenaway

([http://reviewing.co.uk/#50\\_ARTICLES](http://reviewing.co.uk/#50_ARTICLES)), for example using story mapping

techniques, feedback methods and visual reflection. All methods aimed to engage participants, to develop reflection skills and to enhance learning from experience.

Starting the doctoral process was an opportunity for me to introduce an additional reflexive dimension. I developed a set of reflexive questions (Ahern, 1999;



Etherington, 2004) to gain deeper insights into my relationship to and influences on my research topic, and the values that underpin the research approaches that I have chosen. In Table 3 I have included analysis of an extract from my reflective journal.

**Table 3 Extract from my reflective journal 20.01.2010**

Reflexive questions	Observations
How has my personal history led to my interest in this topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As a young teacher I was disappointed by the limits that can exist within conventional teaching practices and values.</li> <li>- Outdoor education course led to an appreciation of developing the self-reliant participant, risk taking and pushing boundaries.</li> <li>- Working predominantly within Third Sector Organisations provided a rich environment for responsiveness, action and change.</li> <li>- As a trainer I see potential for alternative ways to approach evaluation.</li> </ul>
What are my value systems and what areas do I know I am subjective about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Belief in others and their right to participate in and contribute to the things that affect them in life.</li> <li>- Value of tacit experience as a source of knowledge and learning.</li> <li>- I am subjective about enhancing a different evaluation narrative to counter what research suggests is a dominant evaluation for performance narrative.</li> </ul>
How does my gender/social class/ ethnicity/ culture influence my positioning in relation to my topic and my participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female, intuitive, interest in process and how/why things work (or not).</li> <li>- Working class, not 'academic', youngest in family – feeling a need to 'prove' myself.</li> <li>- Coming from a perceived 'powerlessness' a key driver for me is to challenge convention and accepted norms.</li> <li>- I need to be open-minded and not limit research participants to sectors where I am comfortable.</li> </ul>
Where is the power held in relation to my research project and where am I in the power hierarchy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Power is an explicit theme within my research focussing on evaluation as a source of empowerment and strengthening stakeholder voices.</li> <li>- This is in a context where political and economic power are often more dominant over individual, group and organisation.</li> <li>- Research goal is to re-assign or shift power towards individual, group and organisations.</li> <li>- I feel my role in this research is central to these power relations: powerful in terms of making research decisions but powerless in terms of how I influence policy makers.</li> <li>- I need to continually check that I do not lose sight of the individual, group and organisation as central to the research.</li> </ul>

It is not a surprise that my research topic is practice and process focussed. I have chosen an iterative approach that supports theory building and development and is consistent with creating potential for participant engagement at different stages. It is also clear that I am influenced by my experiences from and the values of different professions including teaching, training, experiential learning and finally research and evaluation. An underlying theme is empowerment influenced by earlier perceived experiences of lack of personal power. This analysis also alerts me to a number of learning points.

- I need to be aware not to create too narrow a focus for my research and to maintain awareness of the political and policy environment for evaluation which will help to position my research and its relevance in a wider context.
- I need to ensure that my research participants (individuals, groups and organisations) remain central to my research and the primary focus of empowerment.
- I am curious to see how my different professional influences shape the process and outcomes of my research, for example through the methodologies that I choose, the participants that I work with and the practical outcomes that emerge.

# Study 1 Review of evaluation approaches that empower individuals, organisations and communities

## 1.1 Introduction

Evaluation is an expansive topic which is well documented through landmark texts, journal papers, government reports, specialist organisations and websites. A challenge in my research was to define the particular aspects of evaluation that I am interested in and to draw up the parameters of my study. This literature review aimed to map evaluation approaches that empower individuals, organisations and communities and to create an orienting framework for future empirical studies. The focus of the study was Third Sector Organisations in the UK and explored the following questions.

- What are the factors and dilemmas that are shaping the direction of evaluation in Third Sector Organisations in the UK?
- In what ways are individuals, organisations and communities empowered through participation in evaluation?
- To what extent can evaluation be used as a tool for recognising and hearing the voices of individuals, organisations and communities?

This literature review was initially completed and assessed (internally and externally) in 2011 as the first module of the Prof Doc studies, and was reviewed and revised in 2015 in the final writing up of the full thesis. The literature review provided a starting point for further empirical studies as part of an overall iterative approach to theory building. Further literature was added to inform the specific methodology and themes covered in each of the studies. The literature review describes the methodology used to identify sources and presents the findings in sequence in relation to the study questions. Firstly, I consider the dilemmas for evaluation in Third Sector Organisations in the UK. This is followed by a reflection on different theoretical frameworks or lenses for viewing evaluation contrasting

positivist and participatory evaluation paradigms. By way of illustration I also show examples of the participatory evaluation paradigm in practice based on my own work and also from an empirical study reviewed. The next section reviews and defines evaluation with a particular emphasis on empowerment and suggests some key dimensions for understanding a notion of evaluation that empowers. The final section moves the discussion from the theoretical to the practical when it considers different stakeholder voices which include: the participants or user group voices, organisation voices, government and other funding organisation voices, and finally the evaluator's voice. In the conclusion I draw together the findings to suggest factors for informing an evaluation that empowers model, and identify further research areas and questions that are taken up through later empirical studies. Following completion of this literature review I prepared a poster which was presented to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Methods Festival (Appendix 1, Greenaway, 2010).

## 1.2 Literature review methodology

A first stage in the literature review was to identify three key themes of inquiry related to my topic:

Theme 1) The evaluation environment of the UK Third Sector

Theme 2) Different evaluation methodologies and approaches

Theme 3) Empowerment, validating voices and capacity building

These themes were developed using questions identified by Hart (2002) as core areas which a literature review should respond to, including for example: issues, debates and political perspectives; key theories, concepts and ideas. I created additional questions which were specific and contextualised to each theme. Table 4 shows literature review themes and related questions. These were used as a reference point for identifying literature sources, and to inform the structure and pathway of the literature review as it was developing.

**Table 4 Literature review themes and questions**

<b>Themes:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>
1) The evaluation environment of the UK Third Sector.	What are the major issues and debates? e.g. validity and recognition; funders' needs, expectations and demands What are the political standpoints? e.g. evidence-based decision making, policy making and financial accountability. How does this theme relate to other themes?
2) Different evaluation methodologies and approaches.	What are the different theoretical frames for evaluation? How has evaluation developed? Who are key influencing authors? How is evaluation defined? How does empowerment relate to evaluation? How does this theme relate to other themes?
3) Empowerment, validating voices and capacity building.	What factors contribute to evaluation that is empowering? How does evaluation relate to capacity building? What is the 'voice'? Defining meaning and concept. Whose 'voice' needs to be heard? For example: the 'people', stakeholders, practitioners, organisations. How is the voice of the researcher expressed within qualitative approaches? Why is there a need for these voices to be heard? What are the benefits and outcomes for different stakeholders? How does this theme relate to other themes?

These themes are inter-related, for example: Theme 1 provided a context for the review; Theme 2 provided a main focus and informed and guided the development of Theme 3. I used a mind-mapping approach to progressively develop the three themes which also helped to maintain an overview, and to keep open-minded about how the themes were inter-related. Wallace and Wray (2006) suggest a similar approach using a 'mental map' to provide a critical overview of the literature. Appendix 2 is an example of how the mind map developed. This approach facilitated new ideas to emerge and for priorities to shift. For example: the identification of the researcher's voice within the research process led to a more in depth study of reflexivity; and the evaluation methodologies theme took a different turn by not considering specific methods but by identifying key criteria or characteristics of a participatory evaluation methodology.

A second stage of the literature review involved identifying the key sources and search terms for each theme. These are shown in Table 5. These search terms were used in Cross Search and Google Scholar, and where a particular journal was

identified this was searched individually through issues between 2000-2010. Particular journals searched in this way included *New Directions in Evaluation* and the *Community Development Journal*. Journal papers were selected based on criteria: empirical research relating to evaluation practices in Third Sector Organisations (UK) and NGOs (international); relatedness to the field of community development and learning; and discussion which highlighted different evaluation methodologies. Where journal articles were focused on the period 2000-2010, key texts and authors were identified from pre-2000, and where possible original texts were sourced, for example: Arnstein (1969), Freire (1982), Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Lincoln and Guba (2000), Heron (1981), Parlett and Hamilton (1972), Patton (1997), Reason (1994) and Schön (1983).

A third stage search involved identification and follow up of relevant citations and references from within key texts and identified articles. References were not included where they focussed primarily on positivist evaluation methodology, or where they were specific to a particular field for example medically oriented evaluation. In addition, websites provided helpful context especially in relation to Themes 1 and 2. Overall, I have considered and reviewed a total of 60 sources including texts (12); peer reviewed journal articles and reports (42) including a mix of empirical research; discursive papers, and literature reviews; and 6 web articles. Table 5 is a summary of literature review search terms and key sources. In addition, to get a better feel for the current context of evaluation in the third sector in Scotland, I carried out a scoping interview with the Chief Executive of Evaluation Support Scotland<sup>3</sup>. The findings from the literature review are presented in relation to each of the themes.

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<sup>3</sup> Evaluation Support Scotland is a registered charity. It provides specialist support to voluntary organisations and funders to enable them to evaluate and learn and so provide better services for communities.

Table 5 Literature review sources and search terms

Research themes:	Search terms:	Key sources:
1) The political and economic environment of the UK Third Sector.	Evidence based practice Outcomes Performance Value for money Accountability	Government reports Funders /Charity reports Organisation websites: Charities Evaluation Services - <a href="http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=1">http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=1</a> Monitoring and Evaluation - <a href="http://mande.co.uk/">http://mande.co.uk/</a> Evaluation Support Scotland – <a href="http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk">http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk</a>
2) Different evaluation methodologies and approaches.	Qualitative evaluation methods Participatory evaluation Participative evaluation Collaborative evaluation Evaluation roles Evaluation strategies Empowerment evaluation	Books – theoretical base Journals: New Directions for Evaluation Qualitative Research American Journal of Evaluation Evaluation Journal of Australasia Evaluation Society Websites: Australian Evaluation Society - <a href="http://www.aes.asn.au/">http://www.aes.asn.au/</a> UK Evaluation Society - <a href="http://www.evaluation.org.uk/index.aspx">http://www.evaluation.org.uk/index.aspx</a> American Evaluation Association - <a href="http://www.eval.org/">http://www.eval.org/</a> Canadian Evaluation Society – <a href="http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/">www.evaluationcanada.ca/</a> European Evaluation Society – <a href="http://www.europeanevaluation.org/">http://www.europeanevaluation.org/</a>
3) Empowerment, validating voices and capacity building.	Empowerment Voice Capacity building Community empowerment Stakeholder voices Community voices Practitioners' voices Narrative stories Collaborative research Reflexivity	Books – theoretical base Journals: Community Development Journal Narrative Therapy Journal International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work Qualitative Research Qualitative Health Research

### 1.3 Theme 1 Dilemmas for evaluation in the UK Third Sector

In the UK, evaluation is becoming a core area of skills development and interest in Third Sector Organisations (Ellis & Gregory, 2008; Arvidson, 2009). Government agencies and funders are keen to learn about the outcomes and impact that their initiatives have on policy areas and target groups, and they want to be sure that public money is wisely invested. Essentially they want to know: *What difference does it make?* (Scottish Funders' Forum, 2009; Greenaway, 2010). Third Sector Organisations share this interest in outcomes and impact, but they also face the challenges of securing resources and adapting to change and uncertainties. For them, evaluation can create a tension between: the demand for financial accountability; a need to show results; a competition for resources; a desire to improve; and a commitment to their values and purposes. An added frustration is that, in the main, evaluations in Third Sector Organisations are planned and carried out with good intent, but findings often remain unused or unresponded to by funders (Patton, 1997; Torres & Heskill, 2001; Heady & Rowley, 2008).

This context for evaluation in the third sector raises questions about how evaluation is defined, how it is practiced and who drives it? In an empirical research involving a UK-wide survey of Third Sector Organisations (n=700), funders (n=90), and follow-up interviews (n=90) with national, regional and local Third Sector Organisations, and evaluation support agencies in England, Ellis and Gregory (2008), have highlighted a current evaluation focus within the UK third sector on performance, accountability, results and value for money, especially in terms of the investment of public money. They refer to the particular set of relationships that exist between Third Sector Organisations and government and other funding agencies, which implies a contractual type of relationship that is exclusive to these stakeholders, and is characteristic of government expectations of Third Sector Organisations' role in delivering public services (Carman & Fredericks, 2008). This evaluation focus is narrow in terms of the key players it includes, and reflects a



hierarchical relationship of purchaser and provider or fund giver and fund receiver, where a more powerful funder determines the terms and requirements for evaluation, while an organisation receiving funding may perceive itself as powerless to drive and determine its own approaches to evaluation. The practical implications for this relationship are highlighted in a study by Heady and Rowley (2008) in terms of the cost and resources to Third Sector Organisations in their efforts to report to funders, yet in return feedback and communication from funders remains limited. The purchaser/provider or fund giver/fund receiver relationship is not conducive to dialogue and negotiation and is more likely to lead to evaluation practice where the focus is limited to performance, accountability and results.

Arvidson (2009) explains the importance of accountability as the need for legitimacy and trust in Third Sector Organisations from the public perspective. However, she points out how accountability through increased audit and control may be counterproductive in terms of restoring legitimacy and trust, in that the trend towards the increased professionalisation associated with audit and evaluation, changes the primary relationships between the organisation and the people who are its focus. This concern that formal accountability may be affecting relationships in organisations is shared by O'Neill (2002) who during her Reith Lecture described how this “...*new accountability is ... distorting the proper aims of professional practice*” (para 12). She argued that it is not a matter of abandoning the demands of accountability, but finding different ways to express it. O'Neill (2002) advocated accountability through active inquiry and good governance or what she referred to as ‘intelligent accountability’. This involves a greater emphasis on higher levels of self-determination within organisations; where there is greater honesty about what is achieved and what is not; and where the drivers for accountability are conscious and explicit from within the organisation. However, the idea of honesty in reporting weaknesses as well as achievements may be naïve on the part of Third Sector Organisations in that there will always be a problem for organisations where purchaser/provider type relationships exist, and especially when organisations compete for resources, and when funders retain the power as judge determining the criteria by which organisations are resourced or not.

Similarly, Taylor and Warburton (2003) have pointed to findings from their empirical research based on qualitative interviews (n=15) with key players from Third Sector Organisations and government and in-depth local, national and issue based case studies (n=8). Third Sector Organisations were keen to develop accountability through dialogue and to balance the different demands from the preoccupation of government.

*... towards 'top-down' fiscal and operational forms of accountability, which ensure delivery, rather than 'bottom-up' forms of accountability which ensure that the views of the organisations were fully informed by and accountable to those whose views they claimed to represent. (Taylor and Warburton, 2003, p. 336).*

In a review of UK and US literature (47 sources and 48 websites) including material from Third Sector Organisations, umbrella organisations, funders and partners and academic research, Arvidson (2009) summarises a key challenge for third sector evaluation as the relationships between different stakeholders and the power and politics that shape and influence these relations. More practical challenges include the management of evaluation which focuses on the organisational capacity to carry out evaluations; to use evaluation to develop a culture of learning; and the methodological challenge of understanding the benefits and limits of different evaluation methods. These challenges have been difficult for Third Sector Organisations to answer confidently as they find themselves caught by the demands of monitoring and accountability, and an increasing emphasis on evidence based-policy making and outcome-based funding. The emphasis on outcomes has become a significant feature of government policy at UK and Scottish levels (Scottish Government, 2006), where one of the challenges is to define an organisation's distinct contribution towards wider policy objectives within the government's outcome framework (Ellis, 2009). Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) was established in 2005 after research and consultation showed that many voluntary groups and funders in Scotland have difficulty in developing the understanding, skills and resources to undertake evaluation and to learn from it. A key role for ESS has been to build the capacity of the third sector and funders so that they can be proactive and confident in their evaluation decisions and practices.

This includes Third Sector Organisations being better equipped to compete for funding, being better able to show evidence of outcomes and being better positioned to use and learn from evaluation findings. In addition, for some organisations building credibility to influence and contribute to policy making has also become an important strategy for achieving organisation goals (Arvidson, 2009).

There seem to be three core factors that influence how evaluation is defined and practiced in the UK third sector. Firstly, that organisations face multiple and conflicting evaluation demands in terms of the goals of funders where there is a primary focus on accountability and outcomes. Secondly, that accountability is a determining factor in evaluation decisions and although there can be broader approaches to accountability, it is more likely to be of a fiscal nature. Thirdly, that there is a diverse and complex range of key players and stakeholders involved in the organisation/evaluation process which influences evaluation decisions and purposes. A further factor is the potential for the organisation's own purposes for evaluation which include the drive for achieving mission, generating organisational learning and giving more attention to the voice and experiences of service users.

Updating this theme of the literature review, Harlock (2013) has reviewed a body of third sector organisation policy and practice documents on impact measurement and practice in the UK third sector. Her review maintains that these challenges remain when she concludes:

*There are growing concerns that funders and commissioners' requirements are shaping and dominating approaches to impact measurement in the third sector over the needs of service users, beneficiaries and Third Sector Organisations themselves. (p. 20)*

Theme 1 of this literature review has provided a context for evaluation practice. In the next section, Theme 2 explores different theoretical frameworks and definitions for evaluation.

## 1.4 Theme 2 Theoretical frameworks for evaluation

In the thesis introduction, I outlined the overall theoretical perspective of my research within a constructivist paradigm, and contrasted this with the positivist research paradigm. The literature review now considers these theoretical frameworks (positivist and constructivist) in relation to evaluation methodology. Christie and Alkin (2008) have extensively mapped and classified the evaluation approaches from North America to distinguish theoretical influence in terms of the emphasis given to values, method and use. These indicators are represented by the three main branches of the tree. Their revised 'evaluation theory tree' or 'theory of theories' (2008) provided their updated thinking especially into the distinction between positivist and constructivist based evaluation approaches positioned on the main values branch. They positioned the work of Scriven and Guba and Lincoln equally at the base of the values branch as the guiding theories that influence respectively the positivist and constructivist sub branches. Table 6 provides a summary of factors that distinguish between these approaches based on the literature reviewed. Whilst these distinct approaches each have their place and purpose, within this study the focus is on the constructivist approach and how this can be developed in response to the overall research questions.

**Table 6 Positivist and constructivist evaluation approaches**

<b>Comparative factors</b>	<b>Positivist evaluation</b>	<b>Constructivist evaluation</b>
Approach	Traditional or scientific approach Search for objectivity Summative evaluation – judgment oriented based on end results	A collaborative approach – responsive to the needs of stakeholder groups Formative evaluation – learning, development, improvement as the evaluation progresses
Data	Focus on quantitative objective measures – sees qualitative data as subjective or anecdotal	Focus on qualitative data to expand, explore and develop meaning
Purpose	Useful in large scale evaluations	Useful as a means for influencing social change, developing skills, building capacity and improvement
Role of evaluation participants	Highly controlled Evaluation respondents	Stakeholders shift from objects of evaluation to participants in evaluation
Role of evaluator	Disinterested external evaluator role – brings added objectivity	Evaluator is partner, facilitator, trainer and critical friend

#### 1.4.1 The positivist evaluation paradigm

A positivist evaluation discourse is sometimes referred to as a traditional approach. Smith (2006) describes ‘traditional evaluation’ as a search for objectivity using standardised procedures. There is an over-reliance on objective, numerical and quantitative measures, whilst the collecting of qualitative data is dismissed as ‘subjective’ or ‘anecdotal’. External evaluators are involved in the belief that this increases objectivity. Whilst positivist evaluation approaches are useful in mapping large scale populations and providing overall measures or indicators, they fail to provide detailed explanation of what measures and indicators mean from different stakeholder perspectives. In addition, positivist evaluation approaches are highly controlled at a managerial level (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) which leaves little scope for the participants or those who may be affected by the findings of an evaluation to have input, either in shaping the questions or reflecting on the findings.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have defined the progressive development of evaluation as it has emerged over different generations in response to new issues and thinking. First generation evaluation, during the pre-war period, focused on measurement and testing and was strongly aligned to a scientific approach and the use of measurement instruments; a second generation evaluation, during the post war period, developed a more descriptive approach which combined both measurement and description of patterns as tools for the evaluator; and a third generation evaluation, developed during the 60s and 70s, added judgement to the role of evaluation in response to the need for evaluative decision making. Guba and Lincoln (1989) are keen to point out that although this is a historical perspective, these features of evaluation are still evident in evaluation practice today. In fact, they are features consistent with the positivist 'traditional evaluation' described above.

#### 1.4.2 The participatory evaluation paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have proposed a fourth generation evaluation which reflects a shift from the positivist evaluation predecessors to a constructivist approach where there is an emphasis on evaluation which is responsive to the needs and interests of wider stakeholder groups. It changes stakeholders from objects of evaluation to participants or subjects and opens up greater potential for participant contribution to knowledge generation. Moving beyond Guba and Lincoln, a participatory evaluation discourse (Reason, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997) develops the role of stakeholder participants further in terms of their contribution and role within the processes of evaluation and in the outcomes from evaluation. In this discourse the evaluator and the evaluation participants become partners in a collaborative inquiry, and there is an expectation that evaluation will be useful and used as a means for influencing social change, developing skills and capacity or for improving organisational practice (Patton, 1997; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002; Weaver & Cousins, 2007; Wadsworth, 2001).

Another important evaluation concept is the notion of summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluation is judgement-oriented and interested with

results, objectives or the answers to guide decision making (Fritsch, 1994; Patton, 1997; Smith, 2006), and is most closely aligned to a positivist framework. On its own, summative evaluation can be a blunt instrument because it can take a long time to get to the answers and along the way changes will affect the value of these answers. Formative evaluation or process evaluation is designed to change and improve a programme or product as it is being developed and used so that better end results can be achieved (Fritsch, 1994; Patton, 1997; Smith, 2006). Formative evaluation is also interested in the journey, influencing factors and any differences that exist along the way, and is most closely aligned to a participatory framework. An example of formative evaluation is provided by Parlett and Hamilton (1972) who have described illuminative evaluation as a way to take account of wider influences and contexts, and to discover and document what it is like to be participating in a project from different stakeholder perspectives. They use the term 'progressive focusing' to enable new issues to emerge as a project develops and create space for unplanned or unexpected outcomes and benefits to be accounted for. The significance of summative and formative evaluation within this discussion is the potential that these two concepts can be combined in the same evaluation. For example, in utilisation-focused evaluation Patton (1997) emphasises that evaluation design can draw on any paradigm and method to ensure that it fits with the context and needs of the situation. In this definition, evaluation is about adaptation to the context and reality of the situation, and the people in the situation.

I am interested in the participatory evaluation paradigm firstly, because of this capacity to include different players in the research process in a way that recognises their different perspectives or 'truths' as valid, and secondly, because of the potential for organisational and individual skills and knowledge development as a direct result of the evaluation process. The notion of 'experiential research' is introduced by Heron (1981) where the researcher and the research participants legitimately assume shared roles in the research process, and where the research process itself is an important way to recognise the practical knowing and expertise of the research participants. This collaborative approach to research also challenges the conventional expectations and role of the researcher from one of disinterested

objective technician, to one where the researcher has a wider role in the research process as facilitator and actor. Heron (1981) has provided a guiding template for designing evaluation and research projects where the *“subjects of the research contribute not only to the content of the research i.e. the activity that is being researched, but also to the creative thinking that generates, manages, and draws conclusions from the research”* (p. 153). This emphasis on the role of participants as research partners is also an approach used within action research as promoted by McNiff and Whitehead (2002).

A similar set of ideas about alternative research methods was set out by Freire (1982) in a presentation that he gave in 1972. Freire was keen to distinguish between the different realities of, on the one hand the concrete and objective facts of the social scientist, and on the other hand the subjective reality of how the people involved with these facts perceived them. He goes on to describe a methodology which brings together the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in a critical process of shared investigation, and crucially for Freire (1982), a process of shared learning *“... through this process of investigation, examination, criticism and reinvestigation, the level of critical thinking is raised among all those involved”* (p. 30). Reason (1994) proclaims a participatory worldview which embraces the ideas of Heron and Freire, and raises a critical and political question for research *“Who owns the knowledge, and thus who can define the reality?”* (Reason, 1994, p. 325). He is making clear that when we engage in research it is important to be aware of the different power relationships that influence the process and the outcomes, and within participatory research it is clear that these relationships are explicit and require additional self-reflexive critical thinking. This worldview sees *“human beings as co-creating their reality through participation: through their experience; their imagination and intuition; their thinking and their action”* (Reason, 1994, p324).

#### 1.4.3 The participatory evaluation paradigm in practice

The participatory evaluation literature provides a framework for distinguishing guiding principles for evaluation theory such as the active role of participants in the



evaluation process and the collaborative partnership between the evaluator and the evaluation participants. To give a sense of how these ideas are used in practice, here are two examples, one from my own evaluation practice (Box 1) and another from an empirical research study (Box 2) reviewed (Titterton and Smart, 2008). These examples are reviewed in relation to the participatory evaluation literature.

**Box 1 Community Researcher Approach based on author's professional practice (2006)**

**The Community Researcher Approach**

Faith in Community Scotland – Transformation Team works alongside local Faith Communities to make a difference in the economically poorest communities in Glasgow. They provide a range of services including: community audit, training, accessing funding and developing volunteers, and work strategically to influence policy and decision making in local communities. The Transformation Team carry out an annual evaluation and consultation with their stakeholders to get feedback on their services and to learn more about the difference their work makes for the people they work with. A challenge for the Transformation Team was to find meaningful ways to engage with their stakeholders. They were also keen to use the evaluation process to increase the skills of the people they work with and the evaluation capability of the organisation.

The Transformation Team used a Community Researcher Approach where they recruited, trained and supported a small team of volunteer co-researchers (5) from the groups they work with. This group undertook training covering: the co-researcher role and its boundaries; practising their interview skills; creating and piloting questions. With the support of the external evaluator, they helped to design the questionnaire, carried out interviews with local people (10), community representatives (5) and strategic partners (3) and contributed themselves as subjects within a focus group. They came back together to reflect on their experiences as co-researchers and to contribute to the analysis of the data. The outcomes of using the Community Researcher Approach were that the organisation gathered qualitative stakeholder feedback, the respondents reported that they felt more at ease and were more honest being interviewed by local people, the community researchers developed skills and confidence in a new role, and the organisation was recognised by funders as being a good example of evaluation practice, and gained further funding.

Author's data 2006

This evaluation project was a win: win for everyone concerned, but for me as the evaluator, I was left with questions about how well this process matched aspirations of Heron's model for experiential research and Freire's goals for the realities and perceptions of the people to be truly reflected. Despite the efforts of myself and the organisation to empower the co-researchers as participants and

contributors, and to value the voices of the people in the project, there was a power imbalance. For example: the goals of the evaluation were driven by the organisation; the design of the evaluation was driven by me as the evaluator; so what was the driving force for the participants? They did report benefits from being involved, but they were only aware of what they were involved in, they were not aware of what they were not involved in, namely the decisions concerning the relationship between the organisation and the funder.

**Box 2 Participatory research as a route to empowerment based on Titterton and Smart (2008)**

**Participatory research as a route to empowerment**

Be Well is a community development project operating in a deprived community in Scotland. It is involved in working with local people to identify and meet their health needs through activities such as counselling, complementary therapies, workshops and courses. A research project was set up to identify and evaluate the impact of the community health project on the lives of the service users and the wider community.

A participatory research approach involving service users was chosen as being in tune with the community development values and ethos of the project. Service users were involved in a working group to steer research decisions and were engaged as lay researchers to conduct the community interviews. The expectation in using this approach was that local people would be more likely to respond to another local person, that ownership and commitment to the findings would be generated, and that local people would develop new skills. Overall, lay interviewers conducted interviews with 100 local residents, 50 service users and a sample of 50 members of the population.

This research generated a number of results in terms of the health impact of participating in local activities and especially about the links between stress and coping strategies. Using a participatory approach resulted in greater access to the project by local people, and high levels of trust established in the time available. The participatory research process was seen as empowering in that it involved local people at all stages and increased their skills. For some participants *"... the sense of confidence gained by participants was carried over into subsequent meetings with local authority and health officials"* (p. 59).

Based on Titterton and Smart, 2008

These examples of participatory evaluation are similar in that they emphasise a link between the research/evaluation process and the values and ethos of the organisation, namely to empower user involvement and give voice to local people. Each example aims to achieve this through involving local people in the whole evaluation / research process as community or lay researchers. One distinction that

separates them is that the community researchers in the first example were volunteers whereas the lay researchers in the second example were paid. This difference partly reflects the larger scale of the research involved in the second example, but raises questions about how local people are recognised in the lay researcher role. Is a voluntary capacity more in keeping with the values and ethos of the project and the exchange of skills development for time? and does the distinction between volunteer and paid influence the status of the role of the lay researchers in terms of its validity?

Related to this discussion, Titterton and Smart (2008) identified problems or risks for involving lay researchers in how they influenced the data they collected. Firstly, because they could choose local people to interview meant that they were more likely to interview those they felt comfortable with therefore limiting the range of respondents. Secondly, although involving local people ensured better access, it also raised the issue of confidentiality where sharing personal information may have been more limited within this familiar arrangement. In terms of Heron's (1981) ideas about power sharing within the research process, it is clear that the lay researchers were empowered in their role to participate in research decisions, but there was an imbalance of power between lay researchers and respondents despite safeguards planned to protect and enable local people to participate.

These examples illustrate how participatory evaluation / research is fundamentally an approach as opposed to a set of methods. This means that more traditional methods such as interviews and questionnaires can be used as well as more innovative methods such as discussion groups and visual methods, but that it is the way in which service users and/or local people are involved in the whole evaluation / research process that makes participatory approaches distinct. In creating models of experiential research there are explicit attempts to redefine the evaluator/ researcher/participant relationships and to address the power disparities within more traditional research approaches. The benefits are in the potential for empowering participants in terms of their role and contribution to improving practice, and local decision making, for providing a more grounded access to local

people and their experiences, and the potential for increasing skills and confidence of lay researchers. This participatory approach seems to work best when there is a clear link between the values, ethos and practices of an organisation, project or programme and the research/evaluation process itself; but there are challenges in terms of how the relationships between the researcher, the lay researchers and local people as respondents are redefined and how they work in reality. This practical turn links to the next section which looks more closely at how evaluation is defined within organisational contexts. This brings together the issues and concepts discussed in this literature review under Themes 1 and 2.

#### 1.4.4 Extending definitions of evaluation into organisational contexts

A starting point in defining evaluation is that for many practitioners working in informal, community and third sector settings, evaluation has come to be seen as something that is imposed on organisations from the outside. Smith (2006) has described how evaluation has “*taken a numerical turn*” where the emphasis is on measurement and where evaluation can slip into being an end rather than a means. Evaluation is most often defined as the routine and systematic collection of data where evidence is used to make judgements and determine the value or worth of something (Ellis & Gregory, 2008). Arvidson (2009) adds to this definition by highlighting an evaluation language of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact. While Smith recognises this language and the need for methodical gathering of information, he emphasises that evaluation is “*more than monitoring*” and involves higher levels of thinking in terms of contributing to the generation of knowledge. He adds that meaning making with participants has greater credibility than meaning making for participants. So for Smith the focus for evaluation is on dialogue and inquiry rather than measurement.

In their empirical research Ellis and Gregory (2008) found evidence of a second focus: “... *evaluation for learning and development*” (p. 3) to enable organisations and communities to gain value from their monitoring and evaluation at different levels of practice. This focus implies an additional dimension to evaluation similar to Smith’s, but they do not expand on what this means in terms of the key players

involved and the implication for evaluation practice and methodologies. Arvidson (2009) however, has advocated more of a big picture approach to evaluation using an evaluation framework as a means of assessing the achievements and outcomes of an organisation within the context of its vision, aims and objectives, and in terms of assessing or understanding the contribution to wider social outcomes and impact. This more complex approach to evaluation introduces the notion of the whole organisation and its engagement with its social context, where evaluation becomes a means to an end and provides a tool or *“instrument for organisational learning”* (Arvidson, 2009, p9). Torres and Preskill (2001) describe how evaluation can contribute to organisational learning providing information and feedback about results and processes; by integrating into an organisation’s work activities and infrastructure, and by aligning and confirming organisational values, attitudes and purposes among organisation members. This view of evaluation as part of a learning culture is supported by findings from empirical research by O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan (1998) and Hoole and Patterson (2008). ‘Evaluation Voices’ (O’Sullivan & O’Sullivan, 1998) was a capacity building approach to increasing evaluation skills, knowledge and application across organisation clusters. The focus was on collaboration between programme staff and Voices Evaluation facilitators who assisted the evaluation process and promoted the benefits from shared learning. Evaluation Voices used a sequence to inform continuous learning cycles which started with identifying shared vision and purpose for each programme in the cluster. Programme vision was supported by assessing evaluation resources; identifying barriers to evaluation and training needs prior to making an action plan. O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan (1998) showed how this approach can lead to significant learning for organisations, organisation staff involved in the clusters and the voices facilitators, but they pointed out that this was a long term approach to developing evaluation capacity. It also assumed continuing resources (time and funding) to support evaluation development. More critically, it seems to me that learning is limited to the cluster participants and raises questions such as: what happens when programme staff move on? How are other stakeholders including volunteers and service users included in the evaluation process? Hoole and Patterson (2008) have provided evidence from Third Sector Organisations in the United States and their

evaluation practices. They argued that evaluation focused on measurement and reporting for accountability failed to assist organisations in achieving their mission and purpose, and that it was the organisational learning through capacity building and knowledge generated from evaluation data that helped organisations to respond to issues and change. This pragmatic approach defined evaluation as a functional aid to organisational practice and performance management, and specifically highlighted the role of leadership in driving evaluation as an organisational learning tool.

In terms of defining evaluation, there seems to be areas of agreement in terms of the language used. The Scottish Funders' Forum (2009) has reinforced what it describes as the harmonising of evaluation language. Differences emerge in terms of purpose: whether evaluation is simply a way to measure, demonstrate and prove value; or whether evaluation is measurement plus organisational learning. These differences echo the earlier discussion between positivist and participatory paradigms, but create a possibility for the benefits of each to be combined. The idea of mixing paradigms is quite exceptional, but in the case of evaluation there are pragmatic reasons that organisations have to grapple with the often contradictory demands in responding to multiple stakeholders. Indeed, Patton (1997) in *Utilisation-Focused Evaluation* has described how evaluation practice can call on any of the plethora of methods and models available, but what is important is the attention that is given to ensuring that evaluation is intentional and usable by its primary users within their particular context. There are, however, important differences between evaluation approaches in terms of who are acknowledged as key players and the types of relationships that are developed in different evaluation processes. In Table 7, I have mapped out these contrasting approaches to evaluation using the distinction between accountability and accountability plus learning to reflect the findings from the literature so far. I have used the criteria of purpose, key players, relationships and audience to show the distinctions and the potential of these evaluation approaches. This mapping also shows the role of the evaluator as it is developed differently across these evaluation approaches. It is clear that evaluation can be limited to a technical process designed to account for

the results of investment, but that it can also be extended as a means or tool for organisational learning.

When I began this study I thought that I would be reviewing different models and methods of evaluation, but what I have found is that defining evaluation is more a matter of the different evaluation purposes; the different participants or stakeholders and their relationships; and how the different evaluation decisions are made and driven within the organisational context. Whilst defining evaluation might be straight forward technically, it is also complex in that there are different evaluation discourses: evaluation as accountability; evaluation as learning; and in the next section I will explore the potential of evaluation as empowerment.

Table 7 Defining Evaluation in the contexts of accountability and learning

Evaluation characteristics:	Evaluation for Accountability	Evaluation for Learning
<b>Defining features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on facts, monitoring and concrete evidence.</li> <li>• Emphasis on financial accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than monitoring.</li> <li>• An instrument for organisational learning.</li> <li>• Uses evaluation to inform organisational change.</li> <li>• Includes dialogue with the people involved.</li> <li>• Broad approach to accountability: financial, impact, change, practice, quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose/s of evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To measure, demonstrate and judge value.</li> <li>• Evaluation as an end, used to legitimise Third Sector Organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To measure, demonstrate and judge value.</li> <li>• To create opportunities for organisational learning and development.</li> <li>• To create opportunities for wider social inquiry and to inform practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Key players in evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government and funding agencies.</li> <li>• Third Sector Organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government and funding agencies.</li> <li>• Third Sector Organisations.</li> <li>• Practitioners: staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Local people, service users and beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships between key players</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchaser – provider or Fund giver – fund receiver.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue through critical review and reflection practices lead to learning and development.</li> <li>• Mutual collaboration, recognising and building on the skills and expertise of Third Sector Organisations and the people they serve.</li> </ul>
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle audience is funders and supporters but also provides a formal means of accounting to board, staff, volunteers, service users, and public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation provides formal and informal means of feedback and accountability to stakeholders.</li> <li>• Wider audience of practitioners, staff, volunteers and service users become active contributors and participants in evaluative learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Role of evaluator:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical expert.</li> <li>• Auditor and assessor.</li> <li>• External objective viewpoint.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical expert.</li> <li>• Trainer and developer of internal evaluation skills.</li> <li>• Facilitator of evaluation process.</li> <li>• Critical friend.</li> <li>• Objective/subjective relationship with organisation.</li> </ul>



## 1.5 Theme 3 Evaluation that empowers

In this section, I want to widen the possibilities for evaluation to suggest that there is another evaluation discourse: Evaluation that empowers, which goes beyond the definitions relating to accountability and learning described in the previous section. Evaluation that empowers uses evaluative approaches explicitly to give voice to the different stakeholders, and is more closely related to the participatory evaluation paradigm. I start by considering empowerment and its relation to participation, and go on to look specifically at empowerment evaluation approaches. I finish this theme by focusing on the key stakeholders and their different voices involved in evaluation.

### 1.5.1 Empowerment and participation

Empowerment is one of those slippery terms that is contested and difficult to define (Titterton & Smart, 2008), and is a term linked to the equally difficult notion of power. For the purposes of this review I will use the emancipatory meaning of empowerment most strongly represented in the work of Paulo Freire and his exploration of power as individuals and communities become conscious and influential in their own destiny. Freire (1982) has talked about conscientisation and authentic dialogue as processes for articulating individual experience and reality, and is concerned that dialogue is achieved best when it is in collaboration and co-operation with others. This involves a process of co-creation of knowledge, learning and understanding which gives more authority to the voices of transformation. In Freire's commentary it is clear that social change is an authoritative act achieved through processes of shared participation and learning.

Ghaye (2000) has described the term empowerment as problematic “... *in that it means different things to different people*” (p. 67). In part he is referring to how empowerment relates to particular individual experiences and contexts, for example: empowerment for some people can mean being on a management committee or being part of decision making processes; it can mean setting up a

self-help group to address a personal need; it can mean getting a job or accessing education. Empowerment can also be seen as a process (Ghaye, 2000) where there is some kind of transformation for individuals or organisations, where opportunities and learning can enable a shift in power relations. Titterton and Smart (2008) have expressed empowerment in terms of skills and personal development “... *empowerment involves transfer of knowledge and skills, enhancing self-worth and self-esteem of participants, and by giving participants a voice in improving local services.*” (p. 61). This reference to empowerment as a tool for developing a voice provides a link between learning and action, when individuals and organisations can express and communicate their views and realities in ways which contribute to transformation. It is clear that empowerment in all its interpretations is linked to the relationships between participants and their different interests, and these relationships are most often viewed, as Freire understood the world, as being governed by relationships between the powerful and the powerless. The transformations that Freire (1982), Ghaye (2000), and Titterton and Smart (2008) are referring to are about challenging existing power relations to enable other voices to be heard. Many commentators on empowerment focus on the voice of the powerless as the “*process by which socially excluded or marginalised groups are given a greater voice in matters that affect their lives*” (Titterton & Smart, 2008, p55). This view highlights a contradiction in terms of one group having the power to give a voice to another group, where empowerment might focus more fairly on people choosing to assert their own voice in ways of their own choosing. This contradiction reflects attempts to create different power relationships within existing social, political and cultural arrangements, and exposes a clash of ideologies similar to the evaluation purchaser/provider relationship, where attempts to encourage Third Sector Organisations to engage in critical learning activities may be counterproductive when real funding decisions are at stake. Ghaye (2000) widens this view to include the voice of the professional practitioner, especially in relation to fields like health and education where services are transforming with the explicit aim of enabling users and practitioners to become more influential in the services that affect them. This is

also an example where there are likely to be tensions between empowering practice and traditional hierarchical workplace rules and norms.

This view of achieving social change can hide problems with empowerment when actions which espouse empowerment have the effect of disempowering. For example, promises or suggestions of influence and change may lead to frustration when expectations are raised of improved services (Titterton & Smart, 2008); how people are included may lead to tokenism rather than authentic participation (Arnstein, 1969; Benga, Card, Fajolu, Mohammed, Nelson, Olobo-Lalobo, et al., 2001); and the financial relationships between funders and organisations can lead to funding dependency based on the interests of the funder with the interests of the organisation and its purpose becoming secondary (Ellis & Gregory, 2008; Arvidson, 2009). Newman (2008) in a review of participatory processes used to evaluate Reflect, an adult learning project in Nigeria, highlights a concern that “the process itself can reinforce pre-existing power dynamics through ignoring deeply entrenched power relationships and creating new spaces for the more powerful members of the community to dominate” (p. 382). There is perhaps a further problem whereby empowerment and participation may well be achieved through the research or evaluation process and may create a more informed and powerful voice, but what happens when the process moves from evaluation to action? How effective is evaluation as an instrument of change and influence? Is decision making within evaluation easier to design and manage, but changes when different (and perhaps more traditional) relationships are involved with taking action?

Participation is closely related to empowerment as it provides the means for individuals to engage in collective dialogue with the issues that concern them and to create actions for transformation and change. Arnstein’s (1969) model of participation has been influential with practitioners and policy makers for the last thirty-five years (Tritter & McCallum, 2006). It is based on a hierarchical ladder where the lower rungs represent non participation and highlight an imbalance of power and control. Even higher up the ladder, informing and

consultation is described as passive involvement and even tokenism. It is not until a more even power relationship is created through partnership and delegation that, according to Arnstein (1969), true participation is achieved. Arnstein's ladder of participation exposes a problem in that different levels of participation confer greater or lesser degrees of empowerment, in fact lower down the ladder levels of participation may not be much more than consultation (Titterton & Smart, 2008). This begs the question: who decides and controls the level of participation? Other commentators (Tritter & McCallum, 2006) are critical of Arnstein for focusing on participation as a hierarchy of the power dimension and for seeming to ignore more complex relationships and values at different depths of participation. They argue that Arnstein is missing the individual benefits of the participatory process itself in for example skills development and confidence building. In their empirical study, Titterton and Smart (2008) have supported this view and describe how their findings showed that participatory evaluation is empowering "... in the sense that it taught participants skills such as: communication, interviewing, group discussion, confidence building, reflection, and involved local people at all stages of the research from design through to execution" (p. 59). Their findings also highlighted the problems and challenges associated with using an empowering approach as the dilemma of raising expectations of improved services; how to continually involve community members beyond the research or evaluation process; and the challenge of generating trust within communities where there is a reluctance to take part. These challenges echo the problems with empowerment described earlier, and emphasise that whilst evaluation processes can be designed to be empowering there are important challenges of authenticity (Newman, 2008; Greenaway & Roberts, 2014).

### 1.5.2 Empowerment through participatory evaluation

Participatory evaluation is not a new phenomenon, by the mid -1990's different forms were emerging that described evaluations where "evaluators and staff or programme participants engaged in continuing, dynamic interaction" (King,

2007, p83). Titterton and Smart (2008) describe an expanding interest in participatory research and evaluation triggered by increased consultation in the UK; demands for user involvement in for example the health services; and government policy which places communities at the heart of decision making.

A feature of participatory evaluation approaches is that the evaluation process is explicitly designed as a means and an end beyond simple accountability. Patton (1997) has highlighted the added value and outcomes from using a participatory evaluation process that go beyond the results of an evaluation. He is referring to the capacity building potential or the “opportunity to learn the logic of evaluation and the discipline of evaluation reasoning” (Patton, 2003, p97).

Beyond this he also describes how participation in the evaluation process leads to greater ownership and commitment to both the results and the process of evaluation. These factors are also evidenced in the practice examples given in section 1.4.3. These are significant benefits for the longer term impact of evaluation, for example: more likelihood to act on the findings, and a continued culture of evaluation practice (Torres & Preskill, 2001). Arvidson (2009) has contested this view based on what she identifies as a confusion that exists between process and substance. She argues that “...the link between process – participatory activities, and substance – empowerment and sustainable change is an assumed one” (Arvidson, 2009, p16). She is referring to longer term aims which are difficult to track back to evaluation process as an original source of empowerment, and perhaps is also referring to the shift in control from the evaluation process to the decision making mechanisms of social change where there is no guarantee that evaluation results will be influential or be used. Especially where we have seen that there is a trend towards non-use of evaluation findings.

Characteristics of participatory evaluation have been summarised by a number of authors as a list of principles (Patton, 1997; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002). These include how participatory evaluation is designed so that participants learn through the evaluation process, participants become the decision makers and

evaluators, and the evaluator is facilitator, collaborator, and learning resource. This means that the status differences between the evaluation facilitator and participants are minimised. Crucially, participation is real not token and it is participant led. These principles are evidenced where the participatory evaluation process aims to involve participants at all decision making stages (Rose, 2001; Titterton & Smart, 2008). However, Newman (2008) points out that this ideal of user involvement is difficult to achieve where there are multiple and perhaps competing evaluation objectives and stakeholder needs. In practical terms, at for example the report writing stage, it is not always possible to maintain a high level of participant involvement. Newman (2008) argues for a more relaxed and honest approach to the levels of user involvement that can be realistically expected and achieved.

Cousins and Whitmore (1998) provide a helpful overview in their review of a range of participatory evaluation approaches in an extensively cited article in which they identify two frameworks to enable practitioners and researchers to distinguish between different forms of participatory evaluation, and to review and locate their own evaluation practice. A first framework highlighted the distinction between what they termed Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) where there is an emphasis on organisational decision making and problem solving; and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) which grew out of its emancipatory roots in Latin America, India and Africa, and where there is an explicit commitment to democracy and achieving social change. In their article, Cousins and Whitmore (1998) highlighted these differences, but also identify shared principles such as the contribution to individual empowerment, although P-PE is more about skills development and capacity building and T-PE is more overtly empowerment for social change. P-PE and T-PE both centre on data driven from a practitioner/participant perspective. A second framework (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998) used three dimensions to further compare and contrast different participatory approaches: who controls the evaluation process; the depth of participation, and stakeholder selection. This is a helpful framework but there are elements that are missing such as how accountability is defined and

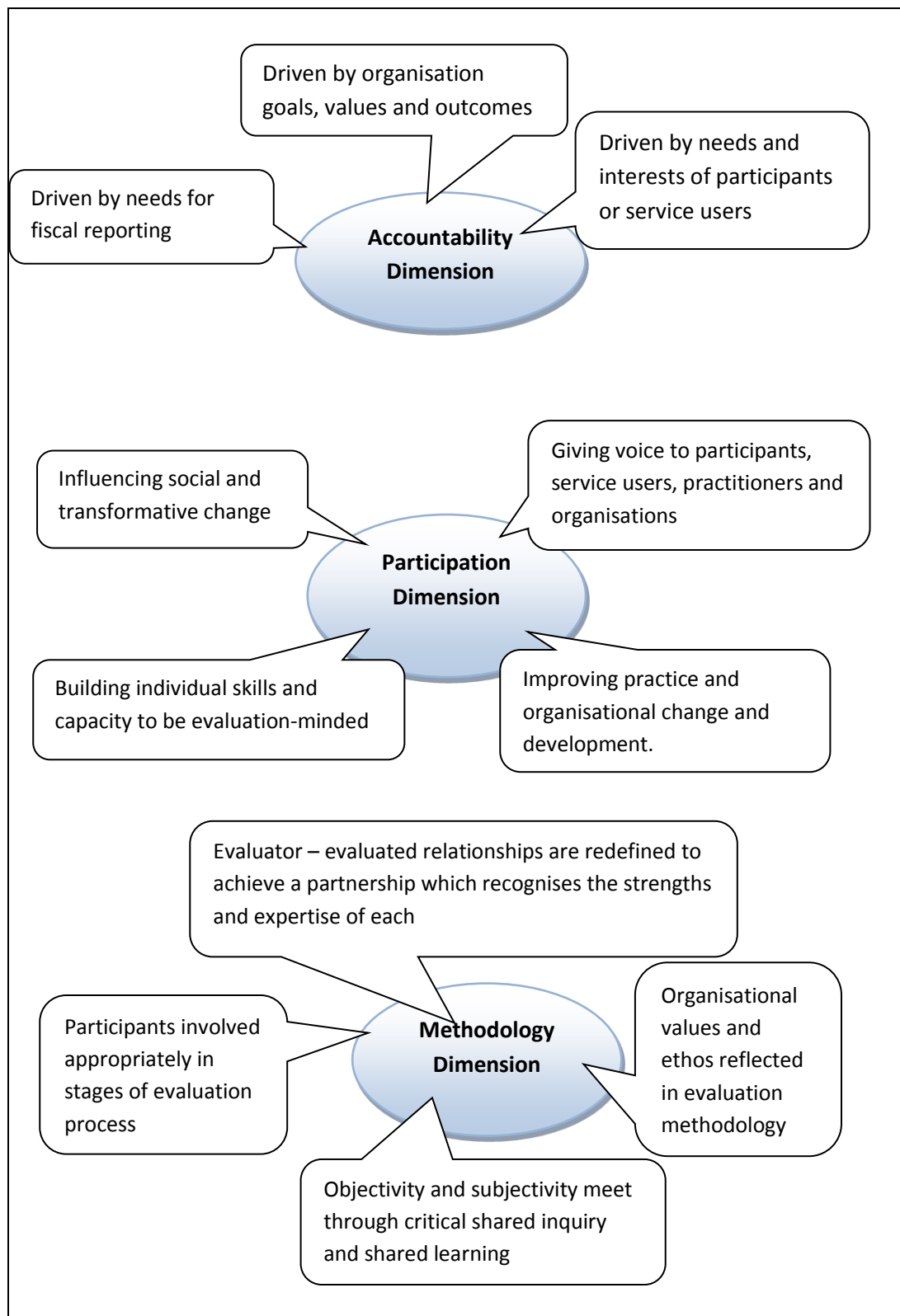
addressed; and their inclusion of the researcher/participant relationship focuses on control without fully exploring the nature of the relationship and how power sharing is defined. Weaver and Cousins (2007) have since reviewed this framework acknowledging the need for more explicit attention to be given to the process domain, especially in relation to stakeholders and their role within a participatory evaluation process. For example, by rating stakeholder control in evaluation decision making, the range of stakeholders, the power relations between stakeholders, the depth of stakeholder participation and how manageable the evaluation process is, evaluation projects can be reviewed in terms of the level of stakeholder involvement. The Cousins and Whitmore (1998) and Weaver and Cousins (2007) frameworks for analysing stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process were influential in the longitudinal case study in Study 2 to assess stakeholder involvement and was discussed by focus group participants to gain their views on P-PE and T-PE in relation to the case study.

Patton (1997) goes further when he described the role of the researcher/evaluator as facilitator and learning resource, but he does not fully embrace the idea of the researcher/participant as a partnership. Similarly, Arnstien's (1969) narrow view on participation focuses on the power dimension without considering the benefits and outcomes from participation. These principles are also reflected by Fetterman (2005) in what he terms 'empowerment evaluation'. This is an approach to evaluation based on a set of principles or lenses through which to view evaluation. They include improvement, community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, social justice, community knowledge, evidence-based strategies, capacity building, organisational learning and accountability. Empowerment evaluation has grown from and been influenced by participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches, but according to Fetterman (2005) distinctions exist in terms of empowerment evaluation's commitment and priority given to the principles of empowerment or ensuring that stakeholders are involved at every stage (similar to participatory evaluation) and social justice or the goal of evaluation as a tool

for social change and the emancipation of stakeholders voices (similar to Cousins and Whitmore's, 1998, T-PE). There is also a focus on evidence-based strategies in the drive to achieve credible results across communities (this has a resonance with Third Sector Organisations accountability relationship with governments and funders). A critical review of empowerment evaluation (Cousins, 2005) highlighted the view that participatory, collaborative and empowerment evaluation approaches are more similar than different. Cousins does not see this as a problem but suggests that empowerment evaluation would benefit from further clarification in order to highlight the distinctions from other evaluation models that emphasise empowerment. He does however recognise that empowerment evaluation has a key role to play in shaping self-evaluation practices in organisations.

In Figure 2, I have created a mind map which uses three dimensions: accountability, participation and methodology to draw the ideas discussed in this literature review into a framework for understanding the notion of evaluation that empowers.

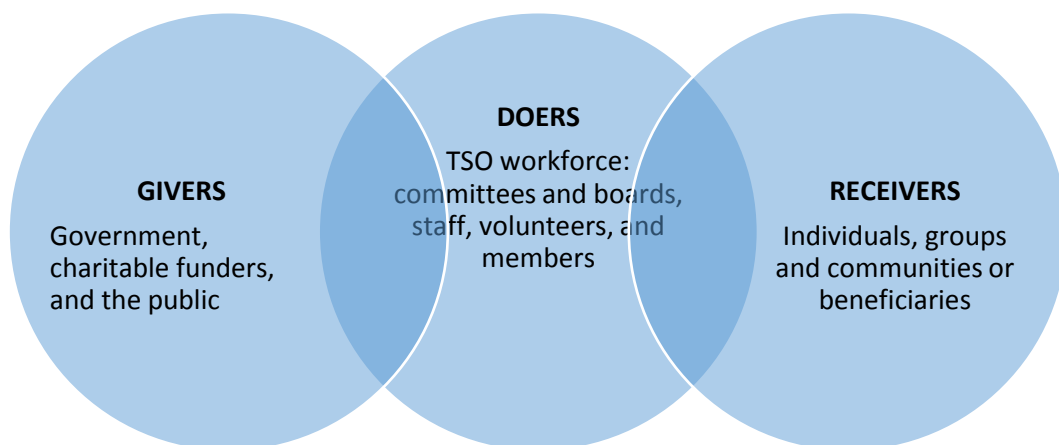




**Figure 2 Dimensions for understanding the notion of evaluation that empowers.**

### 1.5.3 Stakeholder voices

In this section I want to focus on the stakeholders, actors and players who are significant to evaluation: who they are; their goals and interests; and how they relate to each other. Arvidson (2009) refers to the “*interplay between the different actors*” as the “*evaluation arena*” (p. 2). She is referring to the multiple stakeholders or what she calls the “*givers, doers and receivers*”. This goes beyond the narrow relationship of purchaser – provider or fund giver – fund receiver, and introduces new layers and complexity of relationships. Wadsworth (2001) endorses the importance of wider stakeholder involvement in evaluation, especially service providers (doers) and end users (receivers) as more than “... *a nice democratic idea*” (p. 46). Figure 3 illustrates key groups included as givers, doers and receivers, and their inter-relationship.



**Figure 3 Evaluation stakeholders map – the ‘evaluation arena’**

‘Givers’ are involved primarily in a financial relationship with Third Sector Organisations with expectations of fiscal accountability (Taylor and Warburton, 2003). ‘Doers’ are involved in carrying out the vision and purpose of the organisation through a range of activities and programmes. They expect to make a difference and contribute to wider social impact and change, but they are also

aware of their responsibilities to be accountable to the people they serve and the people who support them financially (Taylor & Warburton, 2003). The 'doers' are not a homogenous stakeholder group. There are broad differences in terms of role and status. For example: this group includes a mix of practitioners – staff and volunteers. Staff can be differentiated in terms of managers and field officers, and volunteers can be differentiated in terms of different roles from voluntary board members to practical service providers. 'Receivers' are the beneficiaries of services provided by Third Sector Organisations. This language implies a passive role where in reality many individuals are active players with a goal to influence services that affect them and to have a say in local decision making. (Benga et al., 2001; Rose, 2001; Newman, 2008). These stakeholders have an interest in accountability; making a difference; change, learning and development, but their individual interests in these factors vary. A problem with the 'givers, doers and receivers' model is that it creates a linear hierarchy of relationships, where the drivers for evaluation come from the givers. The doers become gatekeepers in that they are positioned between the need to respond to the givers demands, and a primary drive to achieve their organisational goals and give high priority to the needs of the people or cause that they support. In this model the driver for evaluation is the relationship between the givers and the doers. The receivers become respondents in a more traditional evaluation approach.

Another way to think about the players, stakeholders and the people involved in the evaluation process is to think about their different voices, how they are given expression and how voice can have an influence on the evaluation process. Voice as a word has strong associations with power and influence: Give voice to – expression of a feeling, opinion etc. Give someone a voice in a decision – a stated choice, wish, or opinion, the power or right to have an opinion heard and considered. The voice of ... an agency through which is communicated another's purpose, policy etc. (Collins English Dictionary, 1995). This association with voice

can be seen in agencies such as: SCCYP<sup>4</sup>, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People whose role is to promote young peoples' rights; give young people a voice, and help to change things for the better. In terms of evaluation, more traditionally, children and young people would be viewed as the beneficiaries or receivers of services, but looking at evaluation through the idea of voice, changes the relationships between the players or stakeholders. People and communities become the focus for evaluation, and active participants in articulating their voice. Using a voices lens it is possible to view the players or stakeholders, not as anonymous government agencies, funding bodies, Third Sector Organisations, and service users, but as active players identifying their different voices and how these voices are expressed.

### **The voice of the 'powerless'**

Starting with the 'receiver' stakeholders, there is an emphasis on the voice of the 'powerless' or those less likely to be heard, for example: those living in poverty influencing decision makers (Green, 2007; Greenaway, 2010); children and young people involved in changing the issues that affect them (Benga et al. 2001); and mental health patients actively involved in shaping health services (Rose, 2001). Narayan, Chambers, Shah, and Petesch, (2000) highlight the challenge of lack of voice and power, where powerlessness is expressed in relation to employers; the state; an inability to get a fair deal; and lack of opportunity. They show that to bring about change, powerless people need to have ways to get their voices heard which requires changes in the existing power relations and behaviour. Third Sector Organisations become an important vehicle for working together with people to influence behaviour, policy and decision making. A role for Third Sector Organisations is to develop ways for hearing, recording and representing the voice of the powerless. For example, an empirical study by Green (2007) sought to gather the voice and experience of people living in poverty in Scotland with the explicit aim of informing policy decisions in the run up to political

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<sup>4</sup> SCCYP [www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk)

elections. The Poverty Truth Commission in Scotland<sup>5</sup> is an example where 'testifiers,' those who know personally and understand the struggle against poverty, and 'commissioners', those who have the power and influence to change Scotland for the better, meet to hear and record the voices of the poor, and to use the expertise from both groups to influence change.

Expression and use of the 'voice' of: service users; participants in programmes; and those with particular experiences in life such as poverty; as a means of raising awareness of issues relates to Cousins and Whitmores' (1998) model of T-PE where an explicit goal is to influence and bring about wider social changes. In a report on a young people led programme of events exploring children's rights (Benga et al., 2001), the distinction was made between: participation as a means to an end (T-PE) and participation as an end in itself (P-PE). Projects that used participation as a means to an end were the groups who expected change and measured their success in terms of what had happened as a result of their efforts: *"If we believe that children and young people have a valuable contribution to make to the debate, we would expect things to change after we have made our contribution, not for them to remain the same. Otherwise, what's the point?"* (Benga et al., 2001, p24). Projects that saw the value of participation were more focused on the benefits for individuals of taking part such as increased skills and confidence, and saw success in terms of being included in the consultation process and/or having a seat at the table. Whilst this approach to influence and voice was seen as valuable, there were concerns that this 'participation' agenda *"sometimes plays into the hands of those who want to appear to be doing the right thing and involving young people, but who also want to retain the power of adults to make decisions"* (Benga et al., 2001, p24). This concern is echoed by Newman (2008) and Mayo and Rooke (2008). The priorities within these examples focus on the voice of the powerless and the drive for social change. Evaluation may be embedded within these examples but it is not

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.povertytruthcommission.org/> is an initiative of the Church of Scotland to provide a platform and a mechanism for the voice of local people living in poverty to be heard and to influence change.

explicitly referred to or acknowledged as having a role in strengthening or giving added value to their voices. Each of these examples provides evaluative evidence but is not described explicitly as an evaluation process.

Alternatively, other examples can be found where evaluation is explicitly used to hear and record the receiver's voice. These examples have more practical evaluation goals to improve services and more closely match Cousins and Whitmore's (1998) classification of P-PE with an emphasis on participation and stakeholder involvement. This evaluation approach draws on the experiences of people closest to an issue to measure results and performance, and to help inform and improve services. This model emphasises the use of lay or local knowledge in taking account of local voices. Lay researchers are recruited as an integral part of the research/evaluation team (Rose, 2001; Greenaway, 2003; Titterton & Smart, 2008) and are a powerful rationale for participation in that they give direct access to a different kind of knowledge. An example of lay researchers in action is User-Focussed Monitoring (UFM) developed by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2001) as a way to find out what mental health service users think about living in the community, of their services and of their experiences of being in hospital. An important feature of UFM was that the questions were developed and asked by user interviewers. This approach to evaluation is significant because of the intentional involvement of users (receivers) as co-researchers, and because of the explicit aim to "represent service users who often do not have a voice, or if they do it is not heard" (Rose, 2001, p. 4). The Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) (Greenaway, 2003) is another example where an evaluation project was commissioned to review the existing volunteer services to inform and develop new volunteer services. The evaluation approach used was participatory where CHAS staff and volunteers were included as co-researchers generating the questions to generate data based on volunteers' experiences of volunteering with CHAS *"This process has given them (the volunteers) the opportunity to have their views and thoughts recorded, for us to improve and develop our service and for their ideas to be part of the planning for our new hospice."* CHAS Chief Executive (cited in Greenaway,

2003, p. 1). Feedback from the CHAS evaluation process was similar to that found by Rose (2001) that there were higher levels of honesty between volunteers which led to more scope for critical feedback; and there was an appreciation and support for volunteers being involved in the evaluation process. Additionally, volunteers involved as co-researchers experienced skills and personal development, and felt empowered and listened to. They were able to express two voices (or wear two hats) as co-researchers and evaluation participants. Again this is echoed in the study by Rose (2001). These examples provide evidence that where the less powerful groups become participants and co-researchers in the processes of evaluation they do find a platform for their voice, and they help their peers to give voice to their views, whether it is to influence social change or to contribute to practical improvement in services.

However, there are difficulties and ethical implications for using evaluation approaches which highlight the voice of the powerless. Individual, group and community expectations may be raised in terms of what influence can be realistically achieved, and there may be frustrations where people in poverty have a different and more urgent timetable for change from the bureaucratic timetable of policy making. Titterton and Smart (2008), Newman (2008) and Mayo and Rooke (2008) have described how these approaches can be disempowering experiences when nothing happens as a result. There is also an ethical priority to ensure that co-researchers and evaluation participants are supported and safeguards are put in place throughout the evaluation process. These factors are most often addressed through training (Rose, 2001; Greenaway, 2003; Titterton & Smart, 2008), but these ethical issues take us back to an earlier concern or question about who really is in the driving seat? And can empowerment really be achieved through evaluation given the types of stakeholder relationship that are evident namely, the dominant purchaser-provider relationship. Titterton and Smart (2008) have pointed out that community participants may find themselves sandwiched between different political agendas being pursued from above and from below. The particular danger of tokenism where the agenda of more powerful partners' lead is

explicitly acknowledged by Benga, et al. (2001) who warn to beware of “*creating a series of 'stunts' which might enhance the reputation of the organisations without furthering the cause of children's rights*” (p. 5). The response of the project to this issue was to design a strategy where young people genuinely took the lead: organising events; leading workshops and discussions; and recording and reporting the voices of the young people and the adults. In this situation, participation becomes both a means and an end. Perhaps the benefits from the practical participation for individuals can be used to off-set or balance any shortfall in not meeting expectations for social change.

### **The voice of organisations**

More complex and less defined are the voices of the doers: the organisations, and their people – practitioners, staff, volunteers and members (Greenaway, 2010). Collectively, their voice has an important role to represent and reflect the needs and interests of the people, issue or cause that the organisation serves. For example: charities like Oxfam and Save the Children Fund have an explicit role to reduce poverty and to promote the rights of the child. There may also be a strategic goal to develop the organisation voice as an acknowledged leader in its field to influence decision-making and to raise awareness of particular issues. Evaluation strategies become a tool “to communicate authority and credibility” (Arvidson, 2009, p20). Arvidson has pointed out that this status might be more symbolic than actual, but it relates to the drive by Third Sector Organisations for wider legitimacy and recognition (Taylor & Warburton, 2003). Organisation voice can also influence practice, learning and development within the organisation, leading to an evaluative learning culture. The goal is primarily to use evaluation as a tool for informing organisational change and practice development, but this can also be a strategy for gaining credibility and recognition within a wider field of practice with authority and peers (Hoole & Patterson, 2008). This raises the question: how is evaluation linked to organisational voice, and takes us back to the discussion about the purposes for evaluation, whether it is simply a tool for accountability, or whether evaluation can be used more broadly as a tool for learning, inquiry and empowerment. In addition, for organisations, evaluation



becomes a tool to communicate authority and credibility which can impact on fund-raising and campaigning.

Hoole and Patterson (2008) in their study of Third Sector Organisations examined how evaluation practices can be used in achieving organisation mission, and highlight the potential for evaluation *“to foster continuous learning and improvement, build relationships, and facilitate organisational development”* (p. 94). From a set of organisational case studies Hoole and Patterson (2008) identified factors that help organisations to develop an “evaluative learning culture and an infrastructure to support it” (p. 94). In Table 8 I show how Hoole and Patterson’s factors are evident in the earlier example of the CHAS evaluation.

**Table 8 Factors that enable an evaluative learning culture**

<b>Factors that help to develop an evaluative learning culture</b> (Hoole and Patterson, 2008, p111)	<b>Evidence of factors from the CHAS evaluation project</b> (Greenaway, 2003)
A long term commitment to evaluation and evaluation capacity building.	Volunteers recruited and trained as lay researchers for the evaluation project.  Volunteer Researchers Team continues and is involved in further evaluation projects.
Gathering committed teams composed of staff and outside evaluation expertise.	Volunteers recruited from existing experienced volunteer pool.  Volunteer Services Manager is co-worker in project working alongside evaluator.  Evaluation process steered by external evaluator.
Comprehensive approaches evolve over time to best meet the needs of the organisation.	Following the initial evaluation project, other approaches were used for different evaluation questions.
Prioritisation of evaluation for improvement rather than just to meet accountability demands.	Main goal of evaluation is to inform the development of new services.  A secondary goal was to build evaluation skills within the volunteer workforce.
Leadership at all levels in effectively using the information to foster a learning culture and an infrastructure to support it.	Volunteer Services Manager directly uses results and learning.  Value of the project is explicitly recognised and promoted by the Chief Executive.

These factors provide a framework for organisations in terms of enabling an evaluative learning culture to develop, but they fail to place evaluation and the organisation in the context of the real world, namely the political, organisational and financial issues that influence how decisions for action are made as opposed to decisions about good evaluation practices.

Roberts (2007) has supported this potential for evaluation to “*guide change from the ground up through developing a culture of ongoing learning*” (p. 46). She

begins however, with concerns for the lack of voice and recognition for the collective wisdom of the local elders from the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, when governments intervene with drug and alcohol abuse solutions. Evaluation in this scenario becomes meaningless, but her optimism is about a different sort of evaluation where capacity building can enable front line workers and professionals to reflect, evaluate and apply their learning which can lead to better collaboration between professionals to inform politicians and decision making. In this example, Roberts (2007) was highlighting the connection between grass roots or what she calls front line workers, increasing their capability to influence change through their increased evaluative voice. Torres and Preskill (2001) in their work on linking evaluation practice with organisation learning and decision making supported the idea of “a learning approach to evaluation that is contextually-sensitive, ongoing, and supports dialogue, reflection, and decision making in organisations” (p. 387). But they are keen to emphasise that while stakeholder involvement is an important ingredient of an evaluative learning culture, it is not enough to ensure that the outcomes from evaluation are fully integrated into organisation decision making. They point out the challenges in implementing an evaluative learning culture as: the demands of accountability hungry funders; lack of time, support and commitment to sustaining a culture of inquiry within organisations; and the investment of developing internal evaluation expertise. What Torres and Preskill (2001) added to this discussion is the challenge of sustainability of organisational (and evaluation) practices in the context of organisational change.

Within a discussion about organisation voice it is important to acknowledge the significant stakeholder group of practitioners, not least because organisations are reliant on their skills and expertise to achieve their mission. In Third Sector Organisations this is a diverse stakeholder group including a mix of paid staff and volunteers in different roles involving management, decision making and service delivery. This practitioner’s stakeholder voice is most often heard when groups are consulted about their views on issues and challenges that affect them, their organisation or their field of work. In this sense consultation with practitioners is

designed to inform and shape wider policy and practice. For example: Ball and Patrick (2006) report on learning from the 'voices' of Community Learning and Development practitioners including professionals, local community members, and volunteers. These 'on the ground' voices and perspectives were brought together with local and national policy makers to identify emerging issues and themes that affected their organisations and communities. The inquiry provides a helpful framework and a method for bringing together and hearing practitioners' voices, and highlights the challenges involved in trying to reflect these diverse and sometimes competing interests. For example, there are problems in making sure that voices are heard equally and there are dilemmas where different groups have different expectations of change and actions following the inquiry.

Another example of practitioner consultation was as part of Moving Forward: A strategy for improving young peoples' chances through youth work (2007) where the Scottish Government made a commitment to work with the voluntary sector to develop an action plan for volunteering. Youth Scotland<sup>6</sup> took this initiative forward through a Scotland-wide consultation process to evaluate and learn from the experiences of youth work volunteers. The voices of volunteer practitioners were captured and reported in a publication which was disseminated widely to organisations across Scotland. The project operated at two levels: by recording the voice of the volunteers in order to develop wider youth work practices and by empowering volunteers to speak up through the participatory process used. These types of consultation processes do generate interest and enthusiasm within practitioner groups, but they also face similar problems to raising the voice of the powerless, in that they risk raising expectations of action and change which may not fit with the intentions of government and other agencies initiating consultation. There is a disparity between the intended empowered relationships within the consultation process, and the less empowered relationships within policy and decision making.

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<sup>6</sup> Youth Scotland is the largest non-uniformed youth organisation in Scotland and one of the key providers of information, training, advice and support to part time and voluntary youth workers.

### **The voice of government and other funding organisations**

Throughout this literature review the givers or government and other funding organisations have been presented as the powerful partner when it comes to driving evaluation needs and demands, and that their primary focus is on fiscal accountability in terms of investing public money. However, increasingly funders are also examining their role and relationship with the organisations they fund. The Scottish Funders' Forum<sup>7</sup> has taken steps to be explicit in defining the collective voice of funders in terms of their aspirations for a more open relationship between funders and the organisations they fund. *The Evaluation Declaration* (2006) has no formal status in terms of actions or requirements from funders or organisations, but it does map out funders shared intent. The declaration highlights that evaluation should be valued as a process for understanding and learning for improvement, and that it is shared and acted upon, and proposes a relationship of trust between funders and funded organisations in order to get the right balance between accountability and learning and development. However, there are challenges involved for both funders and receivers for shifting the power relationships. For example: how will funders view organisations that, in the spirit of learning and trust, expose their weaknesses and problems in the light of competitive funding decisions? The lack of progress towards achieving a shift in the funder/organisation relationship is highlighted in a pilot study involving Scottish charities (Heady & Rowley, 2008). This study looked at the burden of reporting and the experiences of nine Scottish charities, and showed some success in 'turning the tables' by putting charities in control of their own reporting. A key finding was the need for greater communication between funder and organisation in terms of building a relationship and better feedback in response to an organisation's reporting. This study focussed on evaluation as reporting and whilst it did seek to 'turn the tables', accountability was the primary purpose of evaluation. It did not explore

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<sup>7</sup> The Scotland Funders' Forum established in 2005, brings together statutory and independent funders to share information, identify and address areas of common interest and share best practice and learning.

different ways that accountability might be more mutually achieved or the role of other stakeholders in the funder/organisation relationship. Further work by the Scottish Funders' Forum (2009) explored the notion of harmonising to achieve a more mutual and better understood relationship between funder/organisation, for example the use of a common evaluation language.

### **The evaluator's voice**

Another distinct voice within evaluation is that of the evaluator. Earlier, I showed the distinction between the role of the evaluator within positivist approaches as: technical expert; external and objective. This leads to a detached evaluator voice, in fact it might be considered that within positivist approaches the evaluator does not have a voice. Whereas within participatory approaches the role of evaluator as: trainer and developer, facilitator and critical friend, suggests that the evaluator expects a very different sort of relationship with an organisation and evaluation participants. The evaluator takes on a dual role in which participants see them as active contributor and as objective overseer (Heron, 1981; Rallis & Rossman, 2000; Wadsworth, 2001), and where the status differences between the evaluation facilitator and participants are minimised (Patton, 1997). Titterton and Smart (2008) describe this principal role for the evaluator is in "bridging the gap between service users and policy makers, funders and other service providers" (p. 54). Newman (2008) explains how the evaluator adds to the evaluation process through providing a different angle or viewpoint and by providing feedback and motivating evaluation participants. Crucially, she highlights the evaluator as being pivotal in the evaluation design in terms of how the power relationships are defined and openly discussed. She emphasises the need for honesty and realism between all the evaluation participants in terms of what can be achieved and what are the shared meanings of participation. Mayo and Rooke (2008) summarise the distinctiveness of these evaluation relationships as *"... relationships of trust while maintaining sufficient distance to be able to offer constructive criticism ... as critical friends"* (p. 373). This is where participatory methodology brings together the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in a critical process of shared investigation

and shared learning (Freire, 1982). The evaluator's voice is a distinct part of the evaluation mix which raises challenges in terms of how the role and voice of the evaluator is explicitly understood within the evaluation process; how processes of critical reflexivity are built into the evaluation process; and how the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity is embraced.

#### 1.5.4 Using stakeholder voices within participatory evaluation

The notion of raising different voices within evaluation creates a rich and dynamic way to understand the complex relationships between the stakeholders, actors and players. It also recognises that these players are not just respondents in a discourse of fiscal accountability, but they can be active contributors and learners, and most importantly can better show the impact, outcomes and results of Third Sector Organisations and their projects. The biggest challenge for the evaluator as the co-ordinator of these assets is to create evaluation partnerships shaped by honest and realistic expectations for shared participatory projects.

### 1.6 Conclusion

In this literature review I have identified that evaluation practice in UK Third Sector Organisations seems to be influenced by the demands of funders and the need for accountability. I have examined the idea that evaluation within Third Sector Organisations can be more than a tool for achieving accountability and meeting the needs of funders. I have considered alternative discourses where evaluation can be a tool for learning, where participatory evaluation processes can empower organisations and participants, and where stakeholder voices can express their needs and interests through shared experiences.

These evaluation approaches also pose difficulties and challenges. Relationships of power are at the heart of different stakeholder needs and goals, which raises the question: Whose agenda is the priority? It would seem that accountability, funders and decision makers remain dominant in setting the evaluation agenda for Third Sector Organisations towards financial accountability, measurement

and performance. There is a challenge to realign this arrangement to allow other evaluation voices to emerge. There are also ethical issues and challenges where raising expectations of action and change can create frustration and disappointment. Participants need to be supported in this process to develop their skills, and to build trust and confidence into the evaluation process. In addition, there are practical challenges in adopting participatory evaluation approaches in terms of time and resources.

However, all of the authors reviewed are in agreement that the benefits of using participatory evaluation approaches outweigh any challenges as long as there are honest and realistic expectations about the achievable levels of participation (Newman, 2008). The benefits include access to the views and involvement of the key players, especially the people who organisations support. Having access to deeper perspectives on experience means that participatory evaluation uncovers insights and meaning for informing and shaping better services (Wadsworth, 2001). In addition, the potential for evaluation capacity building for individuals and organisations means that organisations can embed evaluation practices into their planning and development strategies.

There does seem to be a strong link between evaluation, organisational learning, the development of an evaluative learning culture and the involvement of stakeholders. A number of authors (Freire, 1982; Patton, 1997; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 1998; Torres and Preskill, 2001; Wadsworth, 2001; Fetterman, 2005; Weaver & Cousins, 2007; Hoole & Patterson, 2008) have identified a range of indicators and principles that characterise how participatory evaluation approaches can be designed and carried out, such as the involvement of stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process, and the organisational conditions that enhance the potential for participatory evaluation such as leadership commitment. I have brought these indicators and principles together to suggest a potential EtE Model or checklist for developing what could be termed an evaluation-minded organisation. This model could be used to further explore the role and practice of



participatory evaluation approaches in organisations. For example: through an evaluative conversation between key stakeholders to critically review and assess current evaluation practice. Table 9 maps out a potential evaluation that empowers model as a range of indicators and review questions for supporting participatory evaluation approaches in organisations based on the literature reviewed. The primary indicators include:

- different purposes for evaluation;
- leadership and support for evaluation;
- stakeholder involvement;
- stakeholder voices;
- different approaches to accountability;
- evaluation skills development and the use of reflective practice;
- role of an external element in evaluation.

**Table 9 Evaluation that empowers – indicators and review questions**

Indicator	The evaluation-minded organisation ...	Questions related to indicator
1	... has a clearly defined purpose or purposes for evaluation.	What are the purposes of evaluation? E.g. accountability, fundraising, social change, learning and improvement, influencing policy, marketing, other? How is evaluation used in the organisation?
2	... provides clear leadership and direction to support the evaluation purpose/s.	Who or what drives evaluation decisions? How is evaluation led and supported within the organisation?
3	... is accountable to its stakeholders <sup>8</sup> .	How does the organisation aim to achieve accountability? E.g. through results, feedback from/to stakeholders, through dialogue, etc.
4	... involves stakeholders in the evaluation process.	How are stakeholders involved in the evaluation process? Which stakeholders are involved with which evaluation decisions?
5	... uses evaluation as a way to strengthen stakeholder voices.	Whose voices are evident within an evaluation? Whose voice is loudest?
6	... shares the findings from evaluations with its stakeholders.	How does the organisation share evaluation results with stakeholders?
7	... prioritises and supports evaluation as a key organisational skill area.	How is evaluation led and supported within the organisation? How is evaluation capacity developed and sustained? within the organisation?
8	... supports reflective practice as a tool for informing organisational change.	How does the organisation critically reflect on its practices and services to inform organisational change?
9	... recognises the importance of an external element in the evaluation process.	What is the role of external evaluator? E.g. objective technician, facilitator, trainer, supporter, critical friend etc.

A final reflection for me on the potential for using participatory approaches to evaluation, is the realisation that to understand the complex and messy world of experience, it requires adaptable evaluation approaches which are relaxed with

<sup>8</sup> Stakeholders can be external and internal to the organisation, and can include: service users, volunteers, practitioners, partners, funders, managers, staff, and boards and committees.

the diversity and complexity of human endeavour, and embrace the ‘truths’ that are specific to context and individuals in that context. In addition, the expansion of the evaluator’s role means that they become influential in shaping new power sharing evaluation relationships. These evaluation parameters create an exciting learning agenda for the participants in evaluation, evaluators, practitioners and organisations.

### 1.6.1 Implications for further research

Building on this literature review, there are a number of research topics to follow up. In particular, I am interested to explore participatory evaluation processes as they are practised for real in Third Sector Organisations and how these organisations might become more ‘evaluation-minded’. There is potential for further development of an evaluation that empowers model.

- Evaluation developed as an integral element of a learning organisation – towards the evaluation-minded organisation.

What are the guiding indicators that can inform the use of participatory evaluation approaches? Are there priorities or a weighting element to these indicators? Are there missing indicators? What evaluation methods do Third Sector Organisations use in practice? How participatory are they?

- The link between evaluation, action and social change.

How do the principles and practices of participatory evaluation get transferred (or not) in the post evaluation phase? Does participation stop or does it revert back to a top down hierarchical process of decision making? Are there examples of sustainable participatory models that link evaluation to action as a continuous cycle? What are the helping and limiting factors? How effective is evaluation in achieving action and change?

- Exploration of the long term experience of evaluation in organisations.  
What do internal evaluation practices and continuing evaluation cycles contribute to organisation mission and development over time? What are the

evaluation journeys for different stakeholders: the organisation; practitioners; the user groups and the evaluator? What are the issues and challenges involved and how are they addressed?

- The relationship between the funders and the fund receivers.  
What do the givers – government and funding agencies really want from their relationships with funded groups and organisations? Can participatory approaches offer alternative ways to meet accountability needs? Can the evaluation as accountability discourse be challenged or matched with a different discourse – evaluation as learning and empowerment?

## Study 2 Exploring and refining the Evaluation that Empowers (EtE) model based on a retrospective analysis of evaluation practice

### 2.1 Introduction

Study 2 aimed to explore, test and refine an evaluation model (EtE) against the real-life evaluation experience and practices in one organisation. The study built on the findings from the literature review especially in terms of how evaluation can be developed as an integral element of a learning organisation such as identifying guiding principles or indicators based on the participatory evaluation approaches previously discussed. A goal was to explore and define the evaluation-minded organisation. The study explored how the EtE Model could be used to map evaluation practice, and how evaluation practice informed the development of the model. The study used a case study approach to examine the experiences of evaluation in one organisation, drawing on data from pre-existing documents and from consultation with staff to track their evaluation journey from a five-year period.

Key questions that the study explored.

- How do the evaluation practices in action map onto the EtE Model?
- How participatory are these practices, in the context of the organisation studied, for different stakeholders?
- What can be learned about the EtE Model when it is used in relation to real life evaluation practice in an organisation?
- How should the model be refined based on the empirical research in this study?

### 2.1.1 The EtE Model (v1)

The literature review identified a strong link between evaluation, organisational learning, the development of an evaluative learning culture and the involvement of stakeholders.

*Evaluation ... can be enhanced by increasing the connection to the decision-making context within which the evaluation is being conducted and by involving stakeholders in the interpretation and meaning of findings and development of next steps.*

(Torres & Preskill, 2001, p. 393).

At the end of the literature review I outlined the EtE Model (v1) as a set of indicators and review questions based on the literature reviewed. In this study, I planned to use this framework for developing the notion of what I am calling the 'evaluation-minded' organisation. This term was first used in relation to schools (Nevo, 1993) as a way to distinguish between evaluation as assessment, testing and measurement where the focus was primarily on pupil achievement, to a broader approach where other topics become the focus for evaluation such as programmes, projects and internal school processes. Nevo (1993) was interested in evaluation of the "*school as a whole*" (p. 43) and describes the intent of the evaluation-minded school as being "to make evaluation an integral part of the administrative and pedagogical system of the school, and provide a basis for dialogue between school personnel and external requests for accountability" (p. 40). This holistic approach was restated by Volkov (2011) in his use of the term 'the evaluation meme' (p. 38). He was keen to emphasise the wider role that evaluation, and particularly internal evaluation, can play as a catalyst for 'rewiring' (p. 38) the brain of an organisation. He is referring to a culture shift where "*evaluative thinking is not only a process, but also a mind-set and capacity ... the ability, willingness and readiness to look at things evaluatively*" (p. 38). In the EtE Model I am attempting to define a set of indicators that contribute to the development of evaluation mindedness. In this study I aimed to explore, test and refine the EtE indicators in the real life practice setting of the case study. For example: to ascertain whether there is a hierarchy of indicators which suggest priorities for organisational practice, if there are additional indicators that can be

identified through the practice experience, and whether the EtE Model describes evaluation in a meaningful way.

### 2.1.2 The case study organisation

In this study, the EtE Model (v1) was explored and tested in the real life context of one organisation's experiences of evaluation using a case study approach. Their evaluation experiences were the focus for data gathering and theory development, and provide a longitudinal insight into organisational evaluation practice. In this section I introduce the organisation and my relationship to, and involvement with, the organisation as the external evaluator. The case study is reported in full in section 2.3.1.

The case study organisation supports and works locally with communities to tackle poverty and make a difference in one of Scotland's largest cities. Typically, they work in partnership with local people and support them in gaining the skills and confidence to carry out local development projects, such as gaining funding and recruiting staff and volunteers to support community projects. The organisation has also developed a number of practical resources that can be used by other groups such as a Funding Ready Reckoner; and Community Researcher Toolkit. The organisation highlights the importance of 'walking alongside' individuals and communities on a shared journey as one of its guiding principles. It was established in 2005 and is supported by a team of about 5 staff at any one time. Since its inception, some staff members have moved on and other staff have been recruited. The initiative is part of a larger parent body and is overseen by a voluntary advisory group.

At an early stage in its development, the organisation was committed to developing an evaluation framework to measure the impact and outcomes of their work. This evaluation task was supported by me as an external evaluator working alongside the staff team. One of the aims was to build the capacity of staff to carry out evaluation work more independently. Informal feedback from funders indicates that this process has worked well. The organisation is seen as

having produced competent reports showing credible results, and has successfully maintained its funding base despite local cutbacks. Right from the start evaluation was seen as a collaborative enterprise between staff from the organisation and the external evaluator. We designed the project together, drawing on the staff's expertise in their work and my expertise in evaluation. They were very clear that the evaluation should fit with the aims, values and principles of how the organisation worked. For example: matching its commitment to capacity building and empowering individuals and communities. Since 2006 the organisation has used its evaluation framework to report on the outcomes and impact of its work and to review its practices and priorities.

I was engaged as an external evaluator to co-ordinate the design and development of an evaluation framework for the organisation, and to work with staff to implement it during the first year. There was an expectation that the evaluation framework would provide them with the tools for the continuous evaluation and reporting of the organisation's work with a particular focus on outcomes and impact. This was a collaborative task with the explicit goal of capacity building of the staff and community members in evaluation skills. There was an expectation that my involvement would be more hands on in the first year and reduce or change as the organisation and staff became more skilled and confident in evaluation. Each year the evaluation process was reviewed and revised to meet the project's needs and to take account of what was learned in the previous year. This has resulted in an increased role for staff and a reduced role for myself to the point where, in 2011 the organisation decided that it felt able to maintain its evaluation process without my input. This coincides with the point where I invited them to become a focus for my research studies. My current relationship with them is as researcher.

Clearly, as researcher/evaluator I had a close relationship with the organisation which raises questions about my role as researcher of my own work (Etherington, 2007). This relational situation has led me to consider the methodological structures that I can use to ensure a robust and balanced study.



A first step in my reflexive thinking was to ask a peer research student to act as a critical friend in helping me to explore the pros and cons of the influence of my relationship on this study. Our discussions highlighted two key challenges.

- There was a concern for my subjective influence on the study as a result of my close working relationship with the evaluation project. We concluded that this close relationship and trusted position with the project was a strength in terms of gaining access to much deeper insights to generate learning. This matches Stake's (1995) primary criteria for selecting a single case study as one where there is the greatest opportunity to learn, and where the researcher has good access to the case study materials and participants.
- We also considered the methodological challenges involved in achieving rigour given the above subjective context. We identified ways to address subjectivity by creating checking mechanisms such as an analysis structure for viewing data, and involving a third party to sample check analysis work. This matches notions of triangulation (Stake, 1995; Denzin, 1984) and Yins (2003) quality assurance tactics for building a robust case study, such as designing instruments that can be repeated.

These challenges are revisited in the research methodology where I discuss the methodological choices, decisions and ethical issues involved in the study, and provide a detailed account of the specific research methods developed including case study research, documentary analysis and focus group methodology. In the research findings I report on the case study and discuss the learning about the evaluation model and indicators. Finally, I propose a revised version of the EtE Model based on these findings, and in the conclusion, I draw the study together and highlight further research questions.

## 2.2 Methodology

The overall research strategy and data collection methods involved case study research as an approach to investigating a particular phenomenon in the context of one case. The data collection methods were developed using a documentary analysis based on existing documents created by the organisation. The study focused on data generated at three key points: at the start, middle and end of a five-year period. Analysis of these documents raised a number of issues and questions which were followed up through a second phase focus group with the staff from the organisation. The findings from this iterative sequence are discussed in section 2.3. The methodology section ends with the ethical considerations that I have addressed in the study.

### 2.2.1 Case study research methodology

The strength of case study research lies in the capacity for in-depth study of complex social phenomenon in real-life settings (Yin, 2003). In this study case study research provided an opportunity to gather first-hand experience using a variety of data collection methods in the context of an established long term relationship between the researcher, the research organisation and participants. Using case study research is however considered problematic. Yin (2003) highlights the continuing stereotype of the case study as a weak research method based on the perception that case study research is characterised by *“insufficient precision, objectivity or rigour”* (p. xiii). These perceived weaknesses refer to the subjective nature of the content of the case study and the relationships between the researcher and research participants that may lead to accusations of bias. Using a single case study also raises questions about how well you can generalise from one single case. Indeed, a common critique of case study is the limitations for generalising (Sarantakos, 2005). Yin (2003) counters this by highlighting the importance of being clear that the purpose of the single case study is to expand and generate theory or ‘analytical generalisation’ as opposed to proving theory or ‘statistical generalisation’. This assertion maintains the role of case study research as an exploratory tool and therefore a good fit

with the purposes of this study (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995, 2003). Flyvbjerg (2004) in a landmark article also provides counter arguments to support the validity of case study research. In relation to this study he highlighted the value and role of case study in generating context based knowledge, researcher learning and as a key ingredient in a theory building process. These aspects are particularly relevant in a study where I am aspiring to maximize the benefits for participants and researcher.

Overall, this research study was exploratory which focused on learning about how a theoretical idea worked in its real life context. It was a study of the particular experiences of one organisation of the phenomenon being studied – the EtE Model, with a view to further development and exploration of the indicators in other situations. The research used a case study approach as an overall research strategy for guiding research practice, planning questions, and implementing data collection and analysis. Case study also provided an opportunity to examine the longitudinal aspects of the data in terms of how evaluation practice was sustained and/or changed over the time span of the study. This holistic approach is embraced by Yin (2003) when he defined case study as ‘an all-encompassing’ research strategy. Similarly Stake (2003) suggests that case study is not simply a methodological choice in the sense of choosing how to collect data. He says *“as a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used”* (p. 134). In this definition he draws our attention to an important feature of case study, or the decisions about the type of case to be studied and the criteria for choosing which case. In this study I have focused on one case to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of the EtE theoretical model. There was an explicit expectation that learning from this case would be used to develop the model further. Yin (2003) endorses this decision making rationale for using a single case study when a set of propositions have been defined and the case study is designed to “...confirm, challenge, or extend the theory” (p. 40). The above discussion raises an important question for the case study researcher which is how to choose the single case. Stake (1995) provides a set of criteria. He dismisses typicality and

representativeness as unrealistic and unachievable in terms of the single case. For Stake, the primary criteria should be “opportunity to learn” (p. 6). By this he meant identifying a case where there was good access and a willingness to participate. This ensures that the researcher can maximise the learning opportunities. This point reinforces my selection of the organisation for this study as one where I have an established relationship as highlighted in the previous section.

One of the main challenges for case study research is the need for high quality practice and procedures in the production of robust and valid research or “the ability to do a good case study” (Yin, 2003, p11). Guidance for how to achieve a good case study includes developing a range of tactics or protocols. Essentially this is a blue print or overview of the whole research process which clarifies the methods adopted; the analysis that is to be used; and also planning in advance how the case study is to be reported. The case study protocol is an important guide for keeping a case study focused and, where external validation is used, it provides a clear research pathway. Similarly, Stake (1995) recommends triangulation for ensuring that case study research is based on a disciplined approach and not simply a matter of “intuition, good intention and common sense” (p. 107). Triangulation in case study research uses multiple data points to establish and verify meaning. In this way the researcher actively seeks different perspectives on the case study topic to check interpretation and to reveal alternative meanings. These different perspectives are drawn from what Denzin (1984) refers to as ‘triangulation protocols’, or the range of triangulation approaches available to the researcher. For example, investigator triangulation or getting other researchers to verify meaning; theoretical triangulation or exposing data to interpretation from different theoretical perspectives; and methodological triangulation employing a range of data collection methods to view the same question. These are all consistent with Yin’s quality assurance tactics. In Table 10 I have shown how this study matches the criteria for achieving a ‘good case study’.

**Table 10 Study 2 – Rationale for using case study research strategy**

Factors in case study research	Factors in design of case study research in this project
<p>Type of research question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How and why (Yin, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory nature of research study questions How do evaluation practices match the EtE Model? How participatory are these practices?</li> <li>What are the evaluation journeys for different stakeholders: the organisation, practitioners, and the evaluator?</li> </ul>
<p>Type of case study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instrumental (Stake, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations for influencing learning, theory building and generalisation in refining indicators.</li> <li>Plans for further use with other organisations – collective case study.</li> <li>Pre-determined indicators from literature review provide a reference point for data collection.</li> </ul>
<p>Criteria for choosing the case (Stake, 2003).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to learn</li> <li>Access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researcher has long-term (5 years) relationship with case.</li> <li>Organisation is willing to participate, and appreciates being included as a case study.</li> <li>Organisation is a learning organisation which embraces opportunities for learning and development.</li> </ul>
<p>Multi data collection methods (Yin, 2003).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentary Analysis – using pre-existing documents.</li> <li>Longitudinal data collection over five-year period.</li> <li>Consultation with staff from the case study project.</li> <li>Reflexive accounts of researcher/evaluator involvement.</li> </ul>
<p>Quality assurance tactics (Yin, 2003).</p> <p>Triangulation (Stake, 2003; Denzin, 1984).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of theory to inform the development of analysis tools.</li> <li>Use of analysis templates to review and assess multiple sources of data.</li> <li>Use of external researcher to validate a sample of data analysis.</li> <li>Use of key informants to review draft case study report.</li> <li>Use of consultation with key informants to explore and verify meaning.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.2 Data collection methods

Data for the case study were collected using two methods. Firstly, a documentary analysis of existing data. This was a longitudinal study that mapped the organisation's evaluation journey over a period of five annual evaluation cycles. The data used for the study were focused on years 2006-07, 2008-09, and 2010-11 which reflected beginning, middle and end points of the study period. This was followed by a focus group with existing staff involved in the evaluation process. The focus group was used to explore questions that emerged from the documentary analysis.

#### **Documentary analysis**

The documentary analysis included existing evaluation reports and documents to identify and analyse how they matched the EtE Model. A benefit from choosing this method was that the evidence generated by the organisation created the potential for a longitudinal case study, and for gaining insights into the experiences of an organisation and its evaluation policy and practice over time. In addition, the trusted relationship built between the researcher, the organisation and individual participants provided good access to their evaluation documents. A starting point for the documentary analysis was to identify which documents to include. The range of what might be conceived of as documents can be diverse, and requires careful selecting and locating suitable documents within the specific field of action or study focus (Prior, 2003). This selection shifts the status of documents from static and seemingly fixed records into active reference sources. There is an interest not just in the documents, but in their creators or authors; their users or readers; and their settings. These additional ingredients create additional meaning and purpose to documents that give them a context for the field of study. Prior (2003) points out that there is a common view of documents as 'containers of content', but draws attention to the significance of documents as products generated within specific social contexts. A key part of the documentary analysis process is to go beyond content to examine the contextual or situated meanings. In other words, the researcher needs to devise systematic ways to help them to "*read between the lines*"

(Sarantakos, 2005, p.300) through a process of deconstructing and reconstructing messages and meanings.

Documentary analysis was used in this study due to the benefits of accessibility to high quality, spontaneous and original data. Documents were originally produced for purposes other than research, and were not influenced by the research questions. In addition, the documents provided a retrospective account and insights into the research topic going back over time. These benefits were matched by a number of challenges. For example, in terms of access documents considered private or confidential such as emails and letters, or documents not in the public domain may be withheld. The data was also limited to what was recorded at the time and the context in which it was created. This raised a concern about missing data, or that which was not recorded. This relates to the point highlighted previously about the contexts within which documents are first created, and the dynamic relationship between the producer, the consumer and the content (Prior, 2003). In other words, documents tell a particular story, in a particular place and time. In this study this contextual influence made it important that multiple data collection methods were used, and a systematic approach to analysing these documents was developed to facilitate the potential for replication by other researchers.

A secondary focus of the study was to examine the longitudinal example of evaluation in action as demonstrated through the case study organisation and the new insights this practice perspective might generate. Documents were collected and sorted initially into three different types: evaluation plans; evaluation processes for example staff review meetings; and evaluation reports as representing distinct stages or contexts in the evaluation practice cycle. Documents cover a five-year period 2006 – 2011, and focus on a sample of years: 2006/07, 2008/09, and 2010/11. This sample also provided an opportunity to explore change and development over time within the overall case study. A detailed overview of the total documents analysed is included in Table 11. Each document was identified by number and year to aid referencing during analysis.

The documents included a mix of internal private records and plans, internal organisational reports, and official reports for an external audience but which were not public.



Table 11 Overview of evaluation documents – Study 2 organisation

Type of Documents/ Study Year	Study Period 1: 2006-07		Study Period 2: 2008-09		Study Period 3: 2010-11	
	Doc	Document title	Doc	Document title	Doc	Document title
Evaluation Plans	1 06/7	Evaluation Proposal 06-07 Community Researchers Plan Evaluation Framework Updated	1 08/9	Evaluation Proposal 08-09	1 10/11	Evaluation Proposal 10-11
Evaluation Process	2 06/7	Indicators and evidence 06-07	2 08/9	Evaluation Framework: Indicators and evidence 08-09	2 10/11	Evaluation Framework: Indicators and evidence 10-11
	3 06/7	Project Case Study template	3 08/9	Project case study template	3 10/11	Updated template: Telling your story using a case study
	4 06/7	Staff Review sessions - Notes and action plan; Mid-year review sept 06, Individual Meetings Strategic planning day Jan 07	4 08/9	Team Annual Review 2009	4 10/11	Staff Focus Group 22/06/10
Evaluation Reports	5 06/7	Outcome Report 06-07 Learning from Stakeholders	5 08/9	Outcome Report 08-09	5 10/11	What difference do we make? Impact Report 10-11
	6 06/7	Staff Case Studies: sample 1/4	6 08/9	Staff case studies: sample 1/6	6 10/11	Staff case studies: sample 1/4
	7 06/7	Social Justice Resources (SJR) Annual Report 06-07	7 08/9	Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF) Annual Reporting Report 08-09	7 10/11	FSF Annual Reporting Report 10-11

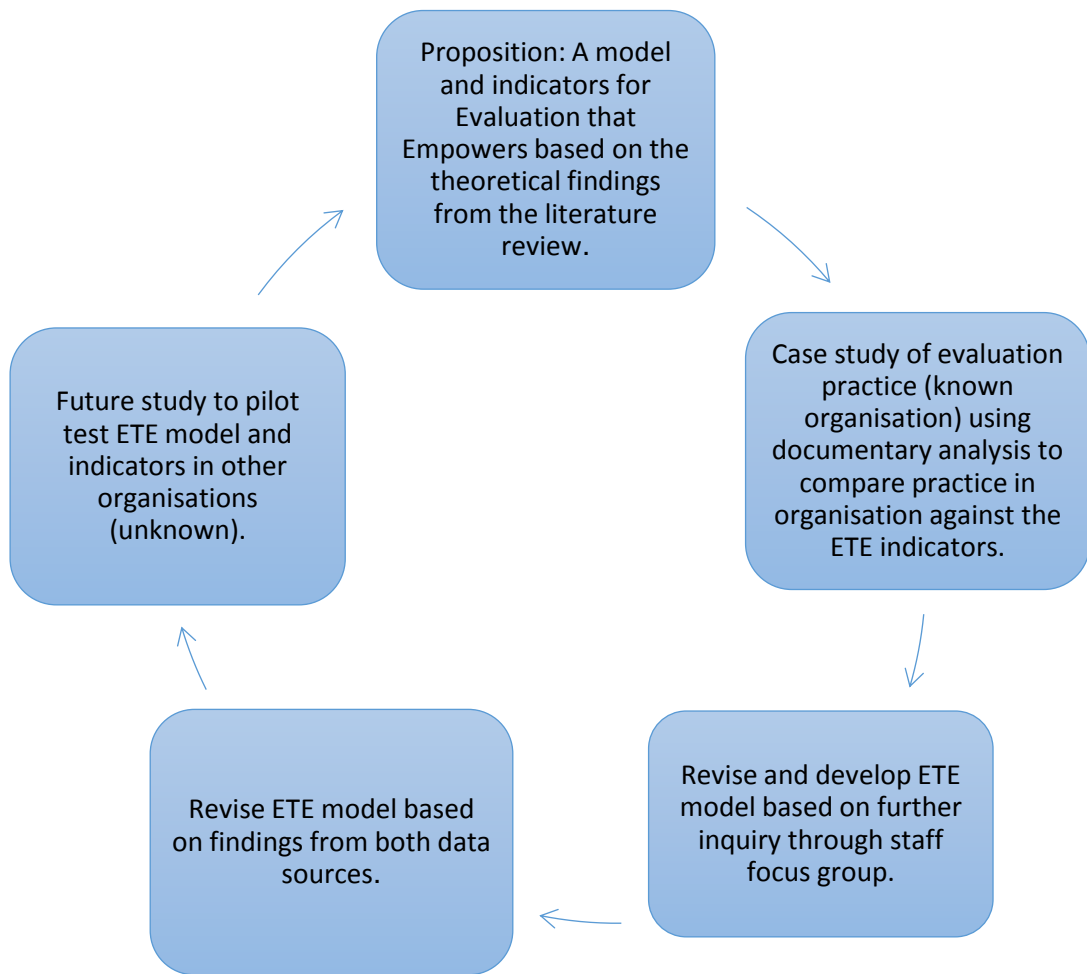
Author's data 2012

These documents were collected directly from the organisation following a short briefing meeting where I explained to key staff the purpose of the documentary analysis, and discussed with them the type of documents that might be suitable. A blank documents table provided them with a guide for identifying suitable documents and locating them in the correct year. The organisation had a central electronic file storage system which enabled staff to select a range of documents for each of the three periods. Decisions about which documents to include rested with the organisation. This meant that the organisation had control over what to include and what not to include, which raised the potential for relevant documents being consciously excluded or simply missed out. It was apparent during the briefing meeting that the documents by themselves would only tell one element of the organisation's evaluation story dependent on what was recorded at the time. Staff were keen to add more informal reflections on the process and the unplanned outcomes that were not recorded. For example: the role played by the manager in leading the process. This gap in data was taken up during the focus group as a means of capturing this more informal experience based evidence.

Once the documents were assembled, a suitable process was needed to analyse the content. This was a challenge given the varied mix of documents identified. Pattern matching as suggested by Yin (2003) was used to compare empirically based patterns with the patterns embedded within the EtE Model v1. This pattern matching helped consolidate the theory or propositions of the EtE Model v1, and non-matching patterns raised new questions and critique for exploring the theory building process further. Using this approach also emphasised the iterative nature of the theory building process or stages of analysis where the case study evidence was examined, theoretical positions were revised, and the evidence was examined once again from a new perspective. In this study this iterative approach was expected to produce final conclusions different from the original propositions of the EtE Model v1. This developmental approach was consistent with a constructivist paradigm where

theory or knowledge generation comes from and is informed by propositional, experiential and practical knowing.

One difficulty through using this theory building approach was the potential to drift away from the original purpose of the research (Yin,2003). Keeping the original focus in mind and referencing back to this at regular points helped to avoid this potential to drift. Having a clear sequence to guide the iterative development was useful for planning the explanation building process. This included: making an initial theoretical statement or set of propositions (the EtE Model v1); comparing the findings of an initial case against the EtE Model and propositions; revising the EtE Model and propositions; comparing or re-comparing aspects of the case against the new theory; and comparing the new theory or propositions against the details of additional cases until a satisfactory conclusion was reached. Figure 4 shows the methodology used in this study and the intention for future studies (Study 3, Study 4a and 4b).



**Figure 4 Iterative sequence showing the position of study 2 in overall research design**

In this study, the documentary analysis was carried out using template and pattern matching analysis. The template analysis involved two separate templates used as a lens for viewing data and provided a means of mapping the case study with the EtE Model. Each template was devised to show comparative analysis of similar documents across the three study years. Template 1 Indicators Map (Appendix 3) was a qualitative tool designed to focus on the meaning and interpretation of each document. The template used a set of questions related to the ETE indicators to analyse each of the documents. Each document was read and evidence within the document identified in relation to each question. For example: What are the purposes for evaluation as evidenced in this document? Evidence was in the form of an interpretive comment and

referenced to examples within the document. This referencing provided a means of checking back through the data, and was a way to verify the analysis made. This template provided a systematic tool for translating the original documents in relation to the indicators. Template 2 Stakeholder Involvement Map (Appendix 4) was a quantitative tool designed to assess specific attributes of the document contents. It used a rating system to identify level of different stakeholder involvement in different decision making aspects of the evaluation process. Each document was read and analysed in terms of which stakeholders were engaged with which evaluation decisions or tasks, for example: Is there evidence in this document that service users were involved in gathering evaluation data? The answer was then recorded as using a grading system: evident and explicit, evident but implicit or not evident (Naulty, Jindal-Snape, Bidwell, & Patrick, 2008). The templates were initially tested by the researcher on a small sample of data to check for workability of the questions and format of each template. Some small amendments were made following this test for example: there was a slight change to the order of the questions. A second pilot test of the documents involved an external check or validation by another research professional. This test was important for checking whether consistent interpretations of meaning were possible when the templates were used by two different researchers. This test highlighted a strong potential for replication of the document analysis process. In addition, a number of improvements were introduced, for example: adding codes to facilitate the tracking of data and examples in Template 1; adding a short description of documents analysed to explain contextual aspects. Each of the documents listed in Table 11 was analysed using Templates 1 and 2. This produced detailed data for each document across the three study periods. A sample of the documentary analysis data using Template 1 is provided in Appendix 5, and a sample of the data using Template 2 is provided in Appendix 6. This data was further collated to show the overall findings for different types of documents: plans, processes and reports, in relation to the individual EtE indicators (Appendix 7 Data Collation Table).

A second stage thematic analysis was carried out on the collated data which involved matching the evidence of practice from evaluation in the organisation against the individual EtE indicators. This analysis was used to write the case study, and highlighted key findings and new questions in relation to the EtE Model. Identifying themes within rich qualitative data such as that found in documentary analysis is one of the most fundamental tasks. Ryan and Bernard (2003) described thematic analysis as a sequence of discovering themes and sub themes, prioritising and linking themes to theoretical models. Within this study a primary set of themes have been used in the form of the EtE Model. This approach provided the theoretical framework for classifying and sorting data. A key role of the thematic analysis was to reverse the relationship between the themes (the indicators) and the data by using the data to critically analyse the indicators. This meant that new learning about the indicators could emerge in the form of new themes and questions. The data from the second stage analysis is provided in Appendix 8. The themes and questions were taken forward to inform the structure of the Phase 2 focus group.

### **Focus Group**

The focus group was used with staff from the case study organisation to explore questions that emerged from the initial documentary analysis. The purpose of the focus group was to explore specific themes and questions arising from the documentary analysis in refining the EtE Model. Using a focus groups was particularly helpful where the main purpose was to gather opinions, learn and expand insights on the findings from the documentary analysis. Specifically, the focus group format of using a semi-structured discussion enabled the organisation participants the opportunity to give their views individually and collectively (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Massey, 2011). In this way the discussion was informed by and the data generated through the lens of different participant perspectives. In this study the focus group included six staff participants all of whom were employed in the case study organisation: two staff were involved in the organisation from the beginning; two staff joined the organisation at a later stage, one of whom has now taken on a lead role for the

evaluation process; and two staff joined the organisation more recently. Within this group there was the capacity for a historical perspective from original staff members who would have been involved in designing the early evaluation plans and decisions and were aware of the values and principles that underpinned evaluation practices at the outset. They were able to reflect on the changes and developments throughout the study period for example how the evaluation had evolved. Another participant brought the experience of taking over the lead role for evaluation within the organisation. Their contribution was from the perspective of the practical management and implementation for example how evaluation tools had been adapted and new tools introduced. Other participants were relatively new to the organisation. Their unique perspective was as staff who were introduced to the organisation's evaluation practices as part of their induction. They were able to comment on how they understood evaluation as it was currently practised by the organisation. To protect the anonymity of the staff they have each been coded FG1 – FG6 which are used to indicate the sources of staff quotes used as evidence.

A set of topics and questions were developed from the documentary analysis findings which were designed to generate additional data where there were unanswered questions or where a topic needed further exploration. The topics and questions were turned into the focus group topic Guide (Appendix 9) which is a recognised strategy (Krueger and Casey, 2009) for structuring the questioning pathway of the focus group. To help staff to be familiar with the concepts being explored a short description of the evaluation model and indicators were circulated in advance along with an outline of the focus group questions. Staff were encouraged to read these before coming to the session. The Topic Guide was developed to include short facilitator's notes to show the method and process for how each topic was introduced, the questions asked and the processes used for discussion.

The first topic served as an introduction to the overall focus group and gave staff a chance to explore their understanding of the model and indicators. Each

participant was given a single indicator and asked to discuss and identify how the indicator related to the organisation, its relevance and meaning. The second topic focused on participation in general as an important aspect of their work and participation as applied to evaluation. This topic was important in developing a deeper awareness of attitudes towards and understanding of how participation was practised within the organisation. After a general and free flowing discussion, I presented the participation models identified by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) – Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) and Transformational Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) and asked which of these models they thought best matched evaluation in the organisation, and whether, in their view, participation was the same as involvement. Views of the focus group participants on this topic are discussed in the findings section. The third topic explored leadership and staff roles in evaluation in the organisation. This was one area that was described in evaluation plans but more detailed information about how roles were developed over time or communicated to new staff was not explicit from the documentary analysis. This was potentially a difficult conversation to have as a group as it focused on themselves and how they saw the roles of their managers and peers. After identifying the key players, each participant used individual post-it notes privately to record their perceptions of evaluation roles and tasks of these players. The post-it notes were then added to headings on a flip chart and collated as a set of lists after the focus group. The fourth topic explored externality and the participants' perceptions about the role of the external evaluator. Discussion on this topic was important for gaining more information about the nature of how this role had developed and changed during the study period. The fifth topic focused on the role of planning, processes, reporting and dissemination. Discussion focused on the relationship between formal and recorded processes and the significance of more informal processes within organisations. Finally, I invited the participants to tell me how they had sustained evaluation in the organisation in the last year without the involvement of an external evaluator. This information was used as the final section of the case study.



The focus group data were analysed to build on the understanding and meaning about the evaluation model. Feedback on specific topics was recorded through note taking by the focus group facilitator, flip chart recordings made by the group and digital recording of the group discussion. These findings were collated into one report to facilitate a thematic analysis. Key points from this analysis were integrated with the findings from the documentary analysis. In particular, quotes from individual staff were highlighted as evidence in support of different themes. The data that participants generated were not confined to single topics as participants' broad experience facilitated wider discussion around each topic and served to reshape the questions in ways that were more relevant to their context. For example, in discussion Topic 1 About the model and indicators, the group discussed evaluation in other organisations and wondered about the groups and projects that they worked with. The potential of this digression by participants in focus groups is commented on by Massey (2011) as providing a rich source of new insights that may not have been available using other research methods. This digression or expansion of the topic also led to new questions emerging which are important for future learning. For example, the question about what small projects and organisations do about evaluation and what the EtE Model could offer them.

### 2.2.3 Ethical Considerations

The main ethical consideration for this study was protecting the confidentiality of the organisation and the staff participants. In this study, a priority was to go beyond standard ethics requirements and to be particularly aware of any explicit or implicit concerns that the organisation and/or the participants might have. This was facilitated by ensuring full involvement by the organisation and staff, and to include them at all stages of the research process. Staff involved were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 10) and completed signed Participant consent forms (Appendix 11).

In addition, I have:

- given a presentation and held an early discussion of my research plans with the staff;
- provided more detailed written information about the research project to the Project Manager, and responded to questions raised by the organisation;
- held a briefing session to discuss the selection of documents;
- highlighted the importance of permission to use the documents including carrying out a sample test by another researcher;
- provided an update to the organisation of findings including a first draft of the case study.

The focus group represented my last meeting with the organisation staff and was an opportunity to discuss potential next steps in for example the dissemination and use of the case study findings. Confidentiality was addressed by describing the organisation and evaluation project using generic terms, and by referring to different staff using a coding system. This generic approach enabled me to raise and discuss critical aspects in a more open way without harm to or exposure of the individual or the organisation. All data collected was stored electronically on a secure computer including digital recordings of the focus group. The study was approved by the University of Dundee Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from the case study organisation and the individuals for their participation in this research project. Appendix 12 includes the acknowledgement of ethics approval.

## 2.3 Findings

The findings describe and discuss learning points about the EtE Model based on the evaluation documents which were scrutinised against the EtE indicators, and the comments and feedback from staff during the focus group. The findings start with the case study as the focus for testing the model. The case study is used to show the application of the EtE Model in action, examines how the organisational evaluation practices match the EtE indicators, and provides insights about longitudinal change and development in the organisation's evaluation practice. A second finding identifies learning points for the EtE Model based on the experiences of the case study organisation.

### 2.3.1 The case study

The organisation was introduced previously. It was studied over a period of five years and provides a unique insight into its evaluation practices and how they have changed and developed over that period. The documentary analysis has revealed a pattern of features or development factors that can be seen as shaping the organisation's evaluation practices. Table 12 is a snapshot of these factors. Some factors highlight the role played by key individuals in a purposeful plan to build on learning and experience for example: the changing role of the staff from skills development to active evaluation contributors; the shift in leadership from the Project Coordinator to a designated member of staff; and the stepping back of the external evaluator. Other factors highlight aspects of organisational life that are harder to control but have an impact on organisation capacity for example: staff changes and changing resource levels. It is a reality that organisations face challenges and tough times, but the case study shows how evaluation practices were adapted and sustained during those challenge periods, and how evaluation was used as a tool to inform wider organisation processes such as strategic review.

*Evaluation is a journey – from where we started things might now seem simple but for other organisations it might be daunting. It is a difficult journey and can uncover all sorts of issues under the surface such as organisational governance. (FG2, 2012)*

**Table 12 Factors affecting evaluation development – Study 2 organisation**

Year	Development factor
2006-07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation project lead by Project Co-ordinator.</li> <li>- Emphasis on involvement of staff in hands on evaluation skills development.</li> <li>- External evaluator works in partnership with organisation and staff to facilitate and guide process.</li> </ul>
2008-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Member of staff is given responsibility to lead evaluation process.</li> <li>- Staff act as the 'evaluation team' to plan evaluation and collect data e.g. monitoring results, tracking inputs and developing case studies.</li> <li>- Changing staff and limited resources affect organisational capacity.</li> <li>- Increased demands from local projects mean staff need evidence based information to guide their decision making.</li> <li>- External evaluator has a more 'light touch' involvement in data gathering activities.</li> </ul>
2010-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on simplifying and reducing the evaluation demands on staff.</li> <li>- Additional organisation outcome created to reflect the importance of staff development.</li> <li>- Organisation takes on full evaluation role independent of external evaluator.</li> <li>- External evaluator is no longer directly involved in evaluation process.</li> </ul>

The following highlights the more detailed story from assessing the organisation's evaluation practices through the lens of the EtE Model, and is an example of what the evaluation-minded organisation might look like. In telling the organisation's story, a number of the EtE indicators have been brought together. EtE indicator numbers and descriptions can be found in Table 9 (p.71). This merging of indicators was taken forward to inform the revision of the model which are discussed later.

### **Evaluation Purposes and Accountability (Indicators 1/3)**

The organisation set out with clear evaluation purposes which were driven by the objectives and outcomes of the organisation. The organisation has sought to be accountable to its different stakeholders and to provide robust reporting of results, for example meeting the requirements of its main funder, and the importance of engagement with people, communities and partners was highlighted as a fundamental aspect of this accountability.

*... local feedback from local stakeholders is important for credibility. (Doc 4- 08/09)*

Accountability was seen as best achieved by developing organisational competence in monitoring and evaluation so that high quality reporting happens internally to inform future decisions and practices, and externally to address the requirements of funders. A more complex measure that the organisation set out to address was to establish and provide **evidence of impact** of the organisation's services for the target users or local participants and communities. Practice case studies were developed as a tool to generate rich stories, to illustrate aspects of organisational practice, and to evidence the impacts in a more qualitative way. The organisation's evaluation also provided a focus for **engagement with stakeholder groups** especially the local communities and participants. This included for example: to highlight the voice of local participants and communities, to promote the work of the organisation, and to influence local developments and partners. In addition, evaluation was seen as a source of **organisational learning and improvement**. This is in terms of capacity building to enable the organisation to become more skilled and competent to evaluate and report on the aims and outcomes of its work, and also to develop the use of evaluation feedback to inform wider organisation strategic review and improvement.

These different evaluation purposes provide a menu. What is important for the evaluation-minded organisation is that a) more than one purpose is adopted and b) evaluation purposes are consciously decided by the organisation and are used to plan appropriate evaluation methods. In effect, the evaluation purposes become the drivers for evaluation practice, and the more purposes there are the greater value evaluation is to the organisation. In addition, accountability is viewed more widely by relating to the wider stakeholder group including the organisation itself and the participants and communities that it serves.

### **Participation and Stakeholder Involvement (Indicators 4/5)**

Stakeholder engagement, especially the involvement of local people and communities, was identified as a key feature of the organisation's practice.

*... consulting local voices on future developments is integral to how the organisation works. (Doc 7-10/11)*

It was also an aspiration and expectation that different stakeholder groups would be involved in different evaluation activities.

*Local people telling their stories, dialogue with the team, feedback to the organisation – what works well and what doesn't? (Doc4-10/11)*

The Stakeholder Involvement Map (Table 13) shows how different stakeholders were involved in different evaluation decisions across all of the documents analysed.




- External stakeholders (local community, service users, volunteers, practitioners, funders and partners) were mainly involved with: responding to evaluation questions; planning future action; sharing and disseminating results; and learning. There was evidence of a wider explicit evaluation involvement during Study Period 1 through a specific community researcher evaluation project.
- Internal stakeholders (organisation managers, staff, and committee) were involved across all evaluation activities except responding to questions, especially in Study Period 1. There is evidence of a transfer of involvement in some activities such as analysing data and identifying key findings to the Internal Evaluator during Study Periods 2/3.
- An Internal Evaluator responsibility was allocated to a staff member after Study Period 1. There was evidence of this role being developed during Study Period 2 and that it was more established across all evaluation activities in Study Period 3.
- The External Evaluator was involved across all the evaluation activities except responding to questions and planning future (organisation) action. During Study Period 2 there was a shift in role to a more 'light touch' involvement during the data gathering activities.

**Table 13 Stakeholder Involvement Map – Study 2 organisation**

Which stakeholders are involved in which decisions?	External Stakeholders				Internal Stakeholders				Internal Evaluator				External Evaluator			
Study periods*:	1	2	3		1	2	3		1	2	3		1	2	3	
Agreeing evaluation aims																
Planning evaluation questions																
Designing evaluation methods																
Gathering evaluation data																
Responding to evaluation questions																
Analysing data																
Identifying key findings																
Report writing																
Planning future action																
Sharing and disseminating results and learning																

\*Study Periods relate to three one year periods used as the focus for study: Study Period 1 = 2006-07, Study Period 2 = 2008-09, Study Period 3 = 2010-11

Key:

	Evident and explicit		Evident but implicit		Not evident
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This split of evaluation involvement between external and internal stakeholders suggests that evaluation was predominantly an organisational activity, where external stakeholders play a more significant role in responding to questions and in sharing the findings. A priority throughout has been to gather feedback from different stakeholders, especially those from local groups and communities. In Study Period 1 an additional evaluation role was created where a team of volunteer service users were involved in planning and carrying out a stakeholder survey on behalf of the organisation. This notion of building local skills was taken a stage further in Study Period 3 when the organisation developed a Community Researcher Toolkit as a means to support communities to gather their own evidence from within their own communities. This development strand is a good example of how the organisation has tried to implement and sustain values of participation, inclusion and empowerment through explicit evaluation activities. These special projects extended the role of external stakeholders in ways that emphasised the development of evaluation skills across the other evaluation activities used in the Stakeholder Involvement Map.

### **Leadership and Direction (Indicator 2)**

Leadership of evaluation in the organisation can be identified as coming from different sources:

- the organisational principles, values, outcomes and results as they are defined in organisational documents and as they are lived out by staff in their practice;
- the role of the lead officer to initiate and support evaluation as a priority in the organisation;
- the role of the internal evaluation officer in leading the practical implementation of the evaluation process;
- the role of the staff to be proactive in designing and carrying out their own monitoring and evaluation e.g. case study of specific practice issues;
- the role of the external evaluator in guiding and supporting the evaluation process.



The organisational evaluation plans showed that at the outset key drivers for evaluation were the ***principles and values of the organisation***, namely participation, inclusion and empowerment. Other driving factors that were acknowledged were ***achieving organisation outcomes and results*** and ***reporting to funders***. Over time it was apparent that other implementation aspects have affected the organisation such as during Study Period 2 a more limited budget and changing staff resources. A significant development for the organisation was the delegation of evaluation responsibilities to a senior member of staff within the organisation. By the end of Study Period 3 there was a clear shift towards a greater role for the internal evaluation officer, reduced demands on other staff and a reduced external role. As well as practical reasons, this shift could also be interpreted as empowerment of the organisation in terms of increased internal evaluation capacity. An alternative interpretation might be that internal resources and activities were rationalised to be more cost effective for example less staff time spent on evaluation activity. An organisation success indicator highlighted in one of the funding reports was

*... leadership by senior management that supports a creative and dynamic approach. (Doc 7-10/11)*

### **Learning from Evaluation (Indicators 7/8)**

The emphasis on learning from evaluation provides a way for the organisation and staff to connect up their evaluation experiences from one year to the next and to make connections with wider organisation practice such as staff appraisal and strategic review. Throughout the study period there was an emphasis on the involvement of staff in hands on evaluation practice. Staff worked together to share and develop their skills and knowledge. Development approaches included: workshops on particular aspects of evaluation such as how to collect stakeholder feedback, annual review to assess strengths and weaknesses of evaluation process and to plan future practice improvements, the case study template also provided guidance for staff on data gathering, analysis and practice review. The organisation has developed reflective practices which were used regularly to inform future plans and decisions. These included:

- staff team review activities and individual staff appraisal used to explore critical questions about practice and to track progress and targets;
- organisational strategic review used to revisit vision, mission, and values and to inform future planning.

These reflective practices used different sources of evidence to inform discussions and to improve practices such as: stakeholder feedback from local participants, feedback from external evaluation findings, and learning developed from the staff case studies.

### **Sharing and Dissemination (Indicator 6)**

At the end of Study Period 1, the organisation hosted a sharing and future planning event as a means to disseminate findings and results from the evaluation with a range of external stakeholders. In subsequent years, explicit dissemination activities were less clear. It seemed that there was an expectation of informal sharing of findings with local participants, for example those individuals and communities that were involved in the case studies. Staff also commented on at least one occasion on the need for better sharing of results and learning. Reporting to funders was seen as formal dissemination of results and staff saw the competence of these reports as an important indicator that the “... *evaluation process was recognised as robust and trustworthy*” (Doc 4-10/11). However, as part of the whole evaluation, dissemination and sharing seemed to be a more informal and implicit activity. It may be that the sharing and dissemination part of the evaluation process, coming at the end of an evaluation project, was in danger of getting watered down or missed out unless it is given specific focus and priority as in Study Period 1.

### **Externality and the External Evaluator Role (Indicator 9)**

It was clear from one of the staff review discussions that an external element was perceived to add to the credibility, objectiveness and robustness of the organisation evaluation. The external evaluator was:

*... seen as bringing credibility to the evaluation process; someone from outside the organisation who is able to give different insights; see development patterns; and ask questions of the organisation. (Doc 4-10/11)*

Throughout the study period evidence suggests that the external evaluator had explicit responsibility for preparing evaluation reports which were used by staff to report to funders, and provided the organisation with: technical expertise in evaluation; facilitation of the overall evaluation process; and guidance and support to staff. During the focus group staff agreed that the external evaluator had contributed technical skills and expertise, but they also described their evaluation journey and how this had changed for them over time.

*At the start it (doing evaluation) felt – oh no, gut wrenching, more to do, wearisome, but it started to feel ok, this is worthwhile, to feeling confident and felt comfortable to do it on our own. We have confidence in the process and in our skills. It's the way of asking us questions and not giving answers – it's been hugely beneficial for us because it gets us thinking about it for ourselves. (FG1, 2012)*

### **Post script – What happened next?**

The focus group was an opportunity to find out what evaluation the organisation had been doing after the study period namely 2011 onwards, and how it planned to address externality in the future (Greenaway, 2013). This question was met with a confident response revealing a strategic approach to evaluation in the organisation. As a result of EtE the team had made and implemented a number of decisions.

- They had reviewed their existing monitoring and evaluation tools to assess them for value and relevance, and reviewed evaluation practices to assess priorities and best use of staff time and resources.
- The organisation had participated in an external Community Planning Audit carried out by the main funder and was successful in securing further funding.
- Staff continued to complete practice case studies, but concerns about the value of this method led to engaging a volunteer to carry out a review.
- The Team also carried out a survey of groups to assess the value and uses of resources and services and the potential for future involvement.
- Higher level discussions with the Board acknowledged the mature position of the organisation with regard to evaluation, and a decision was made to work on a longer timescale by introducing an external evaluation every three years, whilst maintaining the established in house monitoring and evaluation systems.

As researcher, using the EtE Model to examine evaluation practice has lead me to believe that here is a confident organisation which has embedded evaluative thinking and evidence based practices into its work strategically and on a day to day level. They have established and sustained a team approach, and have the skills and knowhow to critically review and assess the value of different evaluation methods. They are very comfortable with, and indeed expect to change and develop based on learning and feedback, and as circumstances dictate such as local needs and demands from communities, staff and funding changes. It would seem that the EtE Model has been useful as a tool for scrutinising evaluation practice and enabling staff to critically reflect on areas to work on in the future.

### 2.3.2 Learning from the EtE Model

The following points highlight specific learning points that emerged as a result of the documentary analysis, and which have been followed up through the staff focus group.

#### **Relevance and meaning of the EtE Model**

The 9 indicators and questions seemed to provide a comprehensive scrutiny of evaluation practice as evidenced through the documentary analysis and illustrated through the case study. Further checking was used to find out how the indicators were understood by the organisation and staff from the evaluation project. For example: Does the language of the indicators convey shared understanding of meaning? Is there any sort of hierarchy or priority within the indicators? Are there any missing, redundant or duplicate indicators? During the focus group staff reviewed each of the indicators in turn. Their discussion revealed shared understanding in that they very quickly started to discuss how each indicator related to their practice and to identify examples of what this meant, for example how it was important for them to include local stakeholders and local voices (Indicator 5). In addition, group discussion also helped them to identify where they thought there were gaps, for example sharing and dissemination was an area that they felt was treated quite informally within the organisation (Indicator 6). This was important as it was a concern that most often they did not receive feedback from

fundere. Sharing and feeding back was seen as a way to show value and recognition of contribution whether it was the input that stakeholders made, or whether it was the organisation's reporting to funders. In this discussion it was clear that the indicators and questions had served as a tool for the organisation to self-evaluate.

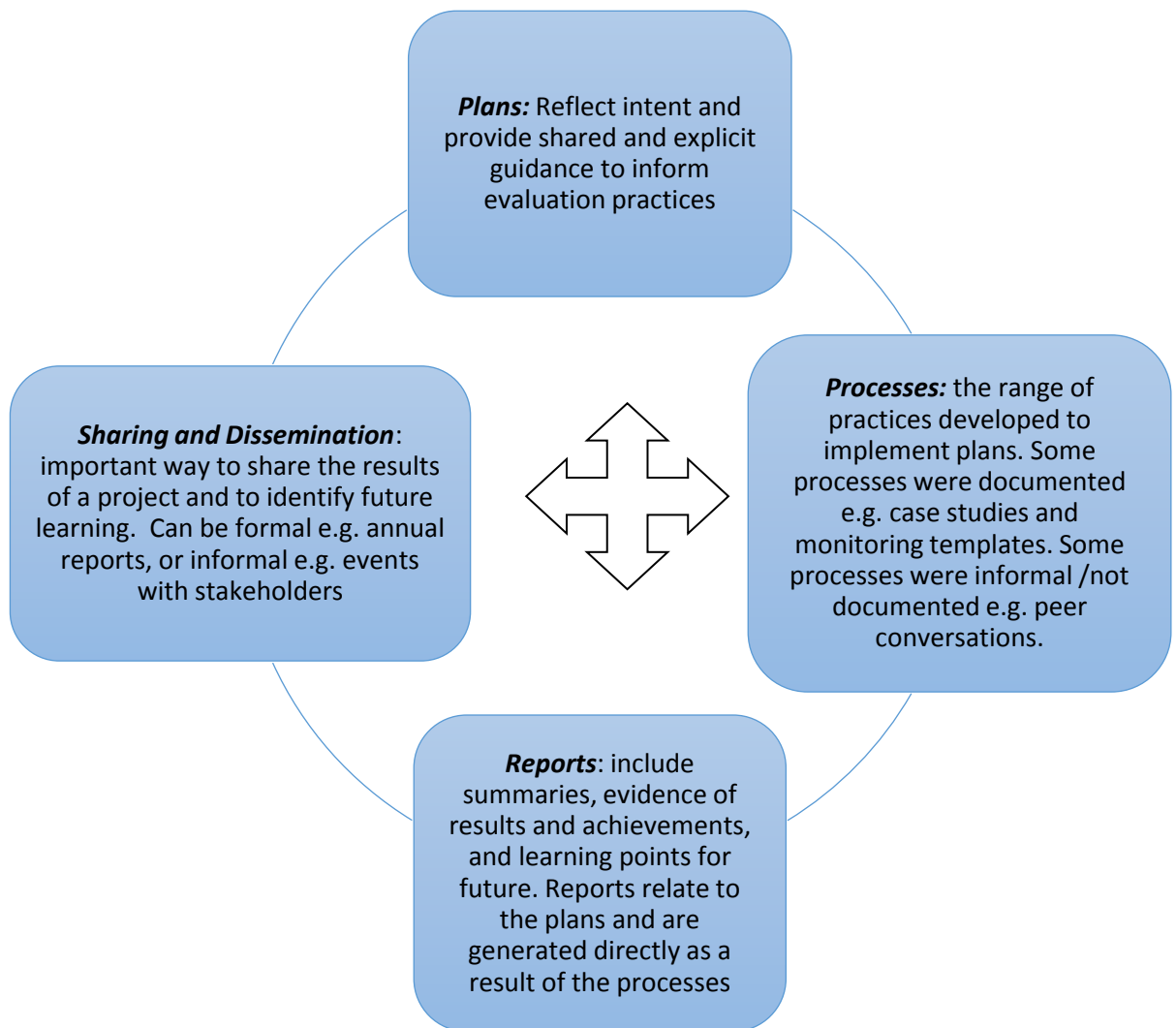
A concern for the group was how well the indicators would work for smaller organisations which may not be familiar with the language of evaluation "*...it's a bit scary*" (FG1). Although the indicators were all relevant, they felt that consideration would need to be given to how the model is introduced and supported through for example the development of tools and guidance on how to do it. They also felt that there was a missing indicator that should reflect celebration and recognition of evaluation results.

### **The need for referencing or benchmarking**

What seemed to be missing from the model was the benchmarking or scoring of the indicators in terms of 'how well' practices match the indicators. This could involve a simple self-scoring of organisation practice in relation to more fully defined indicators, for example what does poor/good/excellent practice mean? This could be used by organisations to identify strengths and weaknesses, to plan improvement activities and to track progress and change over time. During the focus group staff did use the indicators and questions to critically review or self-evaluate their practices. However, they were concerned that this should be a process that is reflective and seeks to build ownership and belief in evaluation by the organisation and staff. The long term development and sustainability of evaluation practices they felt should be built upon understanding, motivation and commitment at all levels. They felt it would not be helpful for a process of benchmarking to become like an administrative audit.

### **The significance of formal and informal practices in supporting change and development through the evaluation process**

The documentary analysis used an initial sorting and classifying of the documents into evaluation plans, evaluation processes and evaluation reports. This classification was chosen to reflect a logical sequence of organisational practice, but it became apparent that this was a significant way to view the evaluation project in addition to the 9 indicators. For example, it showed that where plans and reports tended to be formal, explicit and recorded (Docs 1-08/09; 7-08/09), processes were more likely to be informal, implicit and unrecorded. Process documents were more varied and sometimes covered broader topics like a team away day (Doc 4-08/09) as opposed to focusing on evaluation. Whilst it was fairly straightforward to assess explicit and formal documents, not all processes were or were ever likely to be formally recorded. For example, during staff review meetings key points may be noted in a summary minute (Doc 4-06/07), but the informal conversations, processes and learning between staff would not be. In practice, these informal processes are likely to play an important role in connecting up the planning and the reporting, and therefore contribute to the overall accountability of the evaluation project. Figure 5 shows the relationship between plans, processes and reporting which was evident from the documentary analysis. This sequence has been extended to include sharing and dissemination as a key linking mechanism in completing the cycle and for informing the next cycle.



**Figure 5 Relationship between cycle of plans, processes, reporting and dissemination as suggested from documentary data analysis**

This discussion raises questions about the relationship between formal and informal practices and how they support organisational practices like evaluation for example: What are significant informal processes? How are they sustained and maintained over time? How are informal processes passed on when new staff join the team? What happens if ... you miss out one of the stages? During the focus group staff highlighted the importance of the team and the informal communication and peer support that helped staff to learn what was expected of them in terms of evaluation.

*It takes time to learn new processes, having a team around you means that there are people you can ask and guide you. (FG6) There is the induction process. (FG5)*

They did acknowledge that there was a danger that informal practices could get lost or reinterpreted over time as they are passed on, and that there was also a need for establishing organisational habits such as an annual review, that helped to ensure that evaluation practices remained on the agenda and were critically reflected on. In relation to the Figure 5 cycle, the group highlighted the relationship of internal or inward looking (plans, processes and reports) or those actions that are completed within the organisation, and external (sharing and dissemination) which causes the organisation to look outwards and to make more public its accountability. Although it was acknowledged that reports are also a form of external dissemination. The group played with the idea of missing stages out but came to some clear conclusions that following the cycle could enable an organisation to critically review, develop and adapt practices as organisational situations changed over time.

*I don't think you can leave out the sharing and dissemination ... why spend all this time on evaluation if you're not going to share it? (FG3)*

*If you don't have plans, then you could be running processes automatically, it would limit how you can learn and the potential for growth. (FG4)*

*Drift can occur when you don't follow the cycle, you can end up on automatic pilot doing the same thing over. Where is the review? (FG2)*

### **Participation and stakeholder involvement**

The evaluation project provided evidence that it had explicitly involved a broad range of stakeholders. The evidence matched the participatory evaluation dimensions defined by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) and Weaver and Cousins (2007) who identified two distinct frameworks: Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) where the emphasis was on organisational decision making, skills development and capacity building, and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) where the focus was on empowerment and achieving social change. The evidence from the organisation indicates a good example of P-PE in action, in terms of skills development and capacity building. The project went further where the special projects involving volunteers as co-workers and the community toolkit were good examples of empowerment in terms of capacity building for wider stakeholder



groups. The organisation was less convincing in terms of T-PE in that the evaluation practices were not explicitly designed to directly influence social change. This is not a surprising finding given the original purposes for the evaluation, but it does raise some interesting questions about participation and what it means within organisational evaluation practices. Is evaluation more an organisational tool, where stakeholder involvement is controlled by the organisation and is designed to generate organisational learning? Is it easier to plan deeper stakeholder participation into special one off projects which become exemplars of the overall organisational practices and an easier way to live out the organisation values? A key question here is whether evaluation can achieve the goals of P-PE and T-PE in the context of organisational evaluation? Or are these two modes distinct and separate in their purpose, outcomes and methodology? Is participation the same as involvement?

During the focus group staff discussed what they understood participation and involvement to mean and how it related to stakeholder involvement, the organisation and its evaluation practices. Firstly, they were clear about the distinction between participation and involvement in relation to their work in general. For them participation is more than taking part, it is the deeper interactions that they aim for in building relationships with the groups and people they work with. Participation for them was about working together, and building relationships of trust and mutual exchange.

*It's about folk having access to participation and feeling comfortable with it.*

*It's about trust, when people are willing to share their vulnerabilities, and that you will respect them. Participation is about when people own the piece of work, when they are driving it. (FG comments).*

They described how this is often achieved very slowly over time where the starting point is a practical relationship where the organisation is seen as in the driving seat, but as a group's confidence and skills develop there is a power shift as they take ownership of their own projects and decisions, the shift reflects a progression from practical participation to transformative participation.

*... initially they see you as doing it or leading, but this changes as their confidence grows and they realise that they can do this. (FG6).*

However, the group also recognised that in relation to their evaluation practices, there was more of a focus on P-PE where deeper participation was with staff who were involved in skills development and capacity building, and that this was consistent with their evaluation purposes to measure their results and impacts and to learn about, develop and improve the organisation's services. They did however place significant importance on the feedback and input that they generated from the different stakeholders but this was considered more like involvement than the deep participation that was described earlier. What is interesting here is that, if the organisation and its staff are regarded as the participants in a P-PE approach to evaluation, then the same shift of power has occurred on the journey towards T-PE, where they have developed evaluation skills and expertise and have now taken on full ownership of the process independent of the external evaluator. This transition mirrors the sorts of transitions or transformation that they would hope to achieve with the groups that they work with.

*... when they (the organisation) start to work with a new group or community – the entry level of engagement is practical participatory work, skills development etc. Over time this engagement can lead to transformation for groups especially when they take ownership of their own local development. (FG4)*

However, they did recognise that when a transition of power happens they take a back seat and to a certain extent become “invisible” (FG1) in the eyes of the groups they are working with.

*It is about how people use it (toolkits etc.) but we don't always know what happens when groups start to take ownership themselves. (FG3)*

### Leadership and internal evaluation roles

It is clear that evaluation as an embedded organisational process is dependent on the leadership and internal roles that are developed whether explicitly or more informally. These roles are described in Table 14 and are exemplified by quotes from the focus group.

**Table 14 Evaluation roles across different internal stakeholders – Study 2 organisation**

Organisation Role	Evaluation role
Organisation – Board	To lead and maintain the guiding principles and priorities of the organisation, and to confirm commitments through action and finances. They <i>“Endorse value of evaluation”</i> (FG comment).
Manager or lead officer	To initiate, lead and support evaluation as a priority in the organisation. They <i>“Endorse the importance and value of evaluation. Look out for evolving links and new areas for evaluation.”</i> (FG comments).
Internal evaluation officer	To lead the practical implementation of the evaluation processes and to develop practice. They <i>“Manage the evaluation systems and drive deadlines. Offer support, develop methods and collate reports.”</i> (FG comments).
Staff	To contribute to the evaluation practices of the organisation and to take a lead in their own practice areas. They <i>“Work with evaluation officer to discuss type and format of evaluation. Gather information – do evaluation.”</i> (FG comments).

The case study organisation used a team approach to implement these roles where shared learning, development of practice and feedback were encouraged. However, they were dependent on the leadership, direction and commitment to evaluation from the very top to confirm that evaluation was a valued priority in the organisation. Perhaps the most significant role was the internal evaluation officer in providing the link between the leadership and management and the practical implementation of evaluation. There was also evidence from the documentary analysis which showed a shift in responsibilities and leadership at the point where the internal evaluation officer was appointed. In effect the evaluation officer started to take over the functional roles of implementing and supporting the evaluation from the external evaluator. It remains an unanswered question in this study to what extent would the organisation have been able to sustain its evaluation practices if there had not been this internal leadership role. The

significance of the internal evaluation officer is taken up by Volkov (2011) as *“promoting and advancing positive change, evaluation capacity building, decision making, learning and evaluative thinking in organisations”* (p. 25), which suggests that this role is indeed fundamental to sustained and embedded evaluation practice in organisations.

### **Externality and the external evaluator role**

As the external evaluator, I was involved in the evaluation project. The plan in the first year was that the external evaluator role would reduce over time as the expertise of the organisation increased. The analysis of documents using the Stakeholder Involvement Map (Table 13) suggested that the external evaluator was as involved in the evaluation decisions in Study Period 3 as they were in Study Period 1. During Study Period 2 there was evidence of less involvement which may have been due to a member of staff taking on more explicit responsibilities for evaluation decision making, and/or resource issues. This raises an interesting question about whether and how the external evaluator role changed over time. The focus group participants were clear that there had been a distinct change in their relationship with and the role of the external evaluator.

*At the start the process was quite directive but latterly it has been more asking us. There has been a move from practical input to us doing it ourselves. There was a definite shift from the practical participatory input, there was a transformation, and I felt that the power did shift.*  
(FG4)

The focus group participants also highlighted that they saw inviting externality as a *“brave decision”* (FG2) to open themselves to external scrutiny, but that this had become a strength of the evaluation process *“that someone else has critiqued it”* (FG4). Externality in the evaluation process can have different goals depending on whether it is invited and is perceived as a learning process, or if it is imposed when it can be perceived as a policing process. These factors affect how evaluation is embraced by the organisation and staff as a useful process. Staff also pointed out that *“a relationship of trust”* (FG1) needed to be established between the organisation, staff and the external evaluator.

It is clear that taking on evaluation as a long term and embedded organisational activity involves more than the technical knowhow of evaluation methodology. What is also involved is the process of development where power and ownership is transferred to establish new organisational habits. This new and embedded evaluative culture involves a journey from uncertainty to confidence and clarity, and highlights the importance of a subtler or hidden role of the external evaluator as guide, supporter and critical friend for the handover or ownership of the organisation's evaluation to be complete.

Finally, the focus group highlighted the aspects that they felt had helped them to achieve this independence, or in becoming evaluation-minded. These included:

- building evaluation as a core organisational practice;
- endorsing the importance of evaluation at a high level in the organisation;
- recognising the need to allocate time for the evaluation process, and, that it takes time to establish these practices;
- developing reflective practice as a way to facilitate organisational learning;
- realising the importance of ongoing monitoring and recording of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

## 2.4 The revised Evaluation that Empowers Model (v2)

The EtE Model started out as a consolidation of factors that originated from the literature on evaluation, empowerment, participation and organisational development. The Model has now been tested against the evaluation practices of one organisation. This section describes a second version of the EtE Model as it has been revised from the original format based on the empirical research in this study.

### 2.4.1 Revision 1: The EtE Model – Aims and approaches

One of the results of this study has been to clarify what the EtE Model is, and to develop meaning for the term 'evaluation-minded' which is used to convey a deep and sustainable shift in organisational evaluation practice (Greenaway, 2013). The aim of EtE is to provide a framework for evaluation-mindedness and to guide the development of a range of evaluation practices.

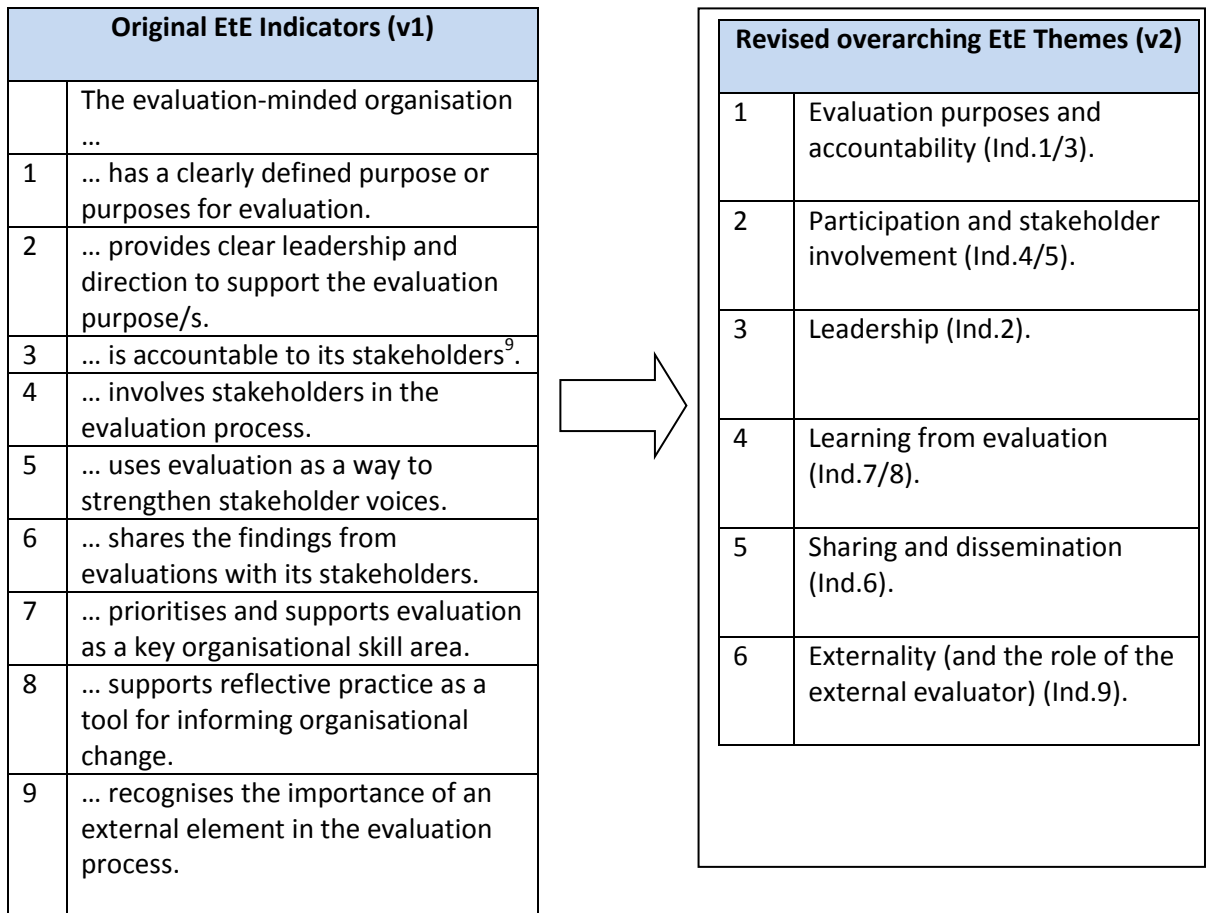
- **Participatory** where different stakeholders have the skills and confidence to:

- be actively engaged in the evaluation decision making processes and activities;
- have a voice in contributing to important evaluative questions.
- **Empowering** when increased evaluation skills and confidence lead to ownership and independence; and increased capacity of the organisation and staff to embed evaluation practices into their day to day activities.
- **Sustainable** when processes of critical review and externality are used to inform change and decision making so that evaluation participants learn from their experiences and can adapt to the context that they are operating in.
- **Embedded** when evaluative thinking becomes part of the culture and day to day practices and habits of an organisation.

The starting point for the EtE Model is consistent with Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) (Cousins and Whitmore, 1998) where the focus is on developing practical skills and capacity in evaluation practices. As the confidence to take on these activities more independently increases, then a power shift or transformation can be achieved. This is not the same as Cousins' and Whitmore's (1998) Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) in that it is not focused on social change but on organisational change. The transformation is no less significant as it is the foundation for deep organisational learning and sustained practices. This is the essence of being evaluation-minded.

#### 2.4.2 Revision 2: The EtE Model – Themes, indicators and self-evaluation questions

One of the main revisions to the EtE Model was to bring together the original indicators into a set of overarching themes (Greenaway, 2013). Using themes provides a way to highlight the main factors that have emerged as significant in influencing organisational evaluation practice in this study. Although these themes are presented in a linear sequence, each theme can be addressed individually, for example the case study organisation identified Sharing and Dissemination as a learning area to focus on. Figure 6 shows how the original EtE Indicators have been revised into overarching Themes.



**Figure 6 Original EtE indicators revised as overarching Themes (EtE v2)**

Each Theme is then defined through the indicators and the self-evaluation questions. New indicators which were highlighted through the case study have been added such as ‘celebrates achievements and success’ (Theme 5). Table 15 shows the revised EtE Themes, Indicators and Self-evaluation questions in full. The EtE Model can be further developed into a set of tools for guiding practice, for example the self-evaluation questions can be used to review current practice, to identify gaps and to generate new actions. The Model could also be used for benchmarking evaluation practices, where organisations revisit the indicators and questions to review progress and to identify new development Themes. A distinct feature of the EtE Model is the aspiration of participation and empowerment, so the process of self-evaluation is used in a developmental way for shared learning between staff in the context of a learning organisation, and is not reduced to a mechanical audit type process.

<sup>9</sup> Stakeholders can be external and internal to the organisation, and can include: service users, volunteers, practitioners, partners, funders, managers, staff, and boards and committees.

### 2.4.3 Revision 3: The EtE Model – Establishing an evaluation learning cycle

Another aspect that has emerged from this study is an evaluation learning cycle which was described earlier in Figure 5 (p. 113). This cycle provides a guide for planning and reviewing cycles of evaluation in organisations. It is important for reinforcing the cyclical and continuous nature of evaluation practices and that they are not a one off activity. The cycle also draws attention to the importance of the full range of activities: planning, processes, reporting and sharing and dissemination. It is by referring to this cycle that it is apparent that if elements are left out then organisation practices may become stuck or entrenched, and lack the critical reflection and review needed to redesign and improve practice within the real life context of the organisation. In other words, the organisation's capacity for change becomes limited.



Table 15 Revised EtE Model (v2) resulting from Study 2

Theme		Indicators: The evaluation-minded organisation ...	Self-evaluation questions
1	Evaluation purposes and accountability	Has a clearly defined purpose or purposes for evaluation. Is accountable to its stakeholders*.	What are the purposes of evaluation? E.g. accountability, reporting, engagement with stakeholders, learning and improvement? How is evaluation used in the organisation? How does the organisation account to all of its stakeholders? E.g. through results, feedback and dialogue, etc.
2	Participation and stakeholder involvement	Involves stakeholders in the evaluation process. Uses evaluation as a way to strengthen voices within the organisation.	Which stakeholders are involved with which evaluation decisions? How are stakeholders involved in evaluation? Whose voices are evident within an evaluation?
3	Leadership	Provides clear leadership and direction to support the evaluation purpose/s. Clarifies how internal evaluation is organised and carried out through staff and others.	Who or what drives evaluation decisions? How is evaluation led and supported within the organisation? What role do others play (staff, volunteers, Board members)?
4	Learning from evaluation	Prioritises and supports evaluation as a key organisational skill area. Supports reflective practice as a tool for informing organisational change.	How is evaluation led and supported within the organisation? How is evaluation capacity developed and sustained? How does the organisation critically reflect on its work to inform organisational change?
5	Sharing and dissemination	Shares the findings from evaluations with internal and external stakeholders. Celebrates achievements and success.	How does the organisation share evaluation results? How does the organisation celebrate success?
6	Externality (and the role of the external evaluator)	Recognises the importance of an external element in the evaluation process.	What is the role of external evaluator? E.g. objective technician, facilitator, trainer, supporter, critical friend etc.

Author's data 2012

\*Stakeholders can be external and internal to the organisation, and can include: service users, volunteers, practitioners, partners, funders, managers, staff, and boards and committees.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The evaluation-minded organisation is one where evaluation practices and evaluative thinking are embedded as normal day to day actions. This culture shift enables the evaluation-minded organisation to apply processes of critical review and evidence-based feedback to inform wider organisational decisions, to develop a hunger for new learning, and to develop better services. More importantly, this is done with an attitude of inclusion and collaboration with others: managers, staff, volunteers, services users and other stakeholders. This study has shown how evaluation was used as a catalyst for 'rewiring' the brain of an organisation (Volkov, 2011).

Maintaining organisational practices like evaluation, over time represents a significant challenge for organisations. Through this study it has become apparent that there are factors that influence the development and maintaining of such practices. On the one hand there are formal and written down procedures that guide implementation such as an evaluation framework, monitoring tools and evaluation methods. On their own they are not enough to achieve success. Other factors are at work that shape the way these practices are lived within an organisation. These might be referred to as the informal and invisible factors such as the peer learning and communication between staff that ensure that practices are passed on, or the values and principles that affect what is fundamentally important such as inclusion, participation and empowerment, or the leadership and priority that is invested in these practices so that everyone knows that they are important. These informal and perhaps invisible factors are the glue that sticks everything together, and are a focus of further interest within future studies.

This study grew out of a concern that evaluation practice was being determined through performance, accountability, results and value for money. EtE is an attempt to define evaluation from a different perspective and to recognise wider stakeholder voices. This is a broader definition of evaluation where: learning and development are a priority and the roles of evaluator and participants in evaluation

become collaborative. However, for these organisations, there are tensions between: the demand for financial accountability, a need to show results, a competition for resources, a desire to improve, and a commitment to their values and purposes. The case study organisation in this study is a good example of an organisation dealing with these challenges. It is clear that the EtE Model and the notion of embedding evaluation-mindedness has an affinity with ideas of participation and learning, and with the aspirations of the case study organisation's values. But difficulties arise when the organisation needs to satisfy multiple demands, and seemingly contradictory approaches. Although this is a single case study, the evaluation experiences, successes and challenges reflect common issues across Third Sector Organisations. A key test of the EtE approach is whether or how well it can articulate with other contexts such as government or funders' perspective at the same time as being relevant and useful for organisations and participant stakeholders. There is also a challenge as to how well the model would fit with organisations from other sectors such as statutory service agencies.

### 2.5.1 Further research questions

The next iterative cycle for this study is to relate the EtE Model to other organisations with different characteristics, such as organisations at different points in their development, particularly those that are just starting out on the evaluation journey, or those that are keen to reformulate existing evaluation practices. In addition, a concern of the case study organisation was the wider applicability of the EtE Model for smaller volunteer led organisations. An outstanding question is whether or how well the EtE Model can enhance evaluation practice in other organisations?

It would seem from this study that establishing sustainable evaluation practice takes a long time.

*Time has to be allocated to evaluation, but also recognition that it takes a long time to establish evaluation practices. (FG5)*

The case study reflects evaluation practice development over a five-year period, after which the organisation became independent from the external evaluator. It is not clear whether this length of time is required, and if so this does not make a very attractive selling point for evaluation in organisations. Therefore, a further question is to look more carefully at how long it takes to establish sustainable evaluation practices, and to identify early success indicators that can make the evaluation journey valuable as quickly as possible. A further consideration will be to assess whether this model can make a serious contribution to current evaluation discourse, especially from an organisational, government policy and funders' perspective.

A final observation on completing this study is that it represents for me a significant body of work as an external evaluator over a considerable period of time. It also represents a next step to making more explicit the values and principles that I feel should underpin how organisations construct their approach to and practices in evaluation. It has also been a big test in the sense that if processes really are to be empowering then there has to be a shift in the power relations of those involved. The person who is perceived as the lead must, at some point, step back and believe in the other party. This is true for all capacity building projects. Capacity is not truly realised until it becomes independent and self-assured. I felt quite humble and honoured to have worked with an organisation that has taken up the reins of evaluation, the power has shifted, they have made me redundant and that is a good feeling. What I realise is that this is a very fragile state as the organisation, just like any other, is open to the external challenges that they face such as fewer resources and staff changes. What makes me hopeful is that this organisation has the capacity for change and has the tools that will help them to adapt.

Following completion of this study I prepared a poster for presentation at the Australasian Evaluation Society Annual Conference 2013. The poster draws together study 1 and 2, and shows the additional development of the EtE Model following the empirical study 2 (Appendix 13, Greenaway, 2013).

## Study 3 Wider context and alignment of Evaluation that Empowers in relation to similar evaluation models

### 3.1 Introduction

Study 3 was triggered following attendance at the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) International Conference 2013. This was a landmark event for me half-way through my doctoral studies. It was an opportunity to test my ideas in a wider evaluation arena, and it introduced me to new thinking and new literature especially related to Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) models. This was important in relation to the development of the EtE Model and required that I critically review the EtE Model in relation to this other literature and ECB models. Box 3 is a reflection on the impact of the AES conference. The aim of Study 3 was to position EtE in relation to similar evaluation models and specifically Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) models from the USA and impact measurement approaches from the UK. The study explored the similarities and differences between these approaches in relation to the EtE Model and highlights issues and considerations for the EtE Model's field testing phase.

### Box 3 Reflection on participation in AES Conference 2013

#### Influences from across the world

*“Hi, I’m Lesley Greenaway and I come from Scotland ...”*

Introducing myself to delegates at the Australasian Evaluation Society’s (AES) International Conference in 2013 I encountered a common response “What brought you to this conference?”

This is a good question to which I could have answered that it was an opportunity to come to Australia to re-engage with friends and colleagues, to explore some of the wonderful east coast highlights, or to soak up winter sunshine that surpasses our best Scottish summers! But my plans were specific, I came to this conference as part of my doctoral research journey, and I had some clear expectations that I wanted to explore.

Firstly, in the UK there is a continuing emphasis on measurement and accounting, with interest, albeit slightly waning, in evaluation models that calculate economic value and social worth. This emphasis does not leave a very big space for alternative methodologies. In Australia I expected a different evaluation culture with more value placed on storytelling and empowerment. I was not disappointed. Being in a qualitative research friendly forum was affirming and enlightening. I found that it created a rich space for critical peer discussion without needing to be defensive.

Secondly, this conference provided an important step in my journey as a doctoral researcher. It was an opportunity to engage with a wider research community, to test my ideas ‘out loud’, and to go away armed with ideas for developing my studies. That I am researching evaluation methodology located my work strongly in the arena of AES.

The conference exceeded my expectations and I was honoured to be awarded the inaugural Ros Harworth prize for best conference paper. My paper, based on study 1 and 2 was published in the AES Journal (2013).

## 3.2 Methodology

Study 3 involved a small-scale literature review focused on some key sources from ECB (Preskill & Torres, 1999; Volkov & King, 2007; Preskill & Boyle, 2008; Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman, & Lesesne, 2012) and impact measurement approaches in the UK (Harlock, 2013; Inspiring Impact, 2013). The section defines ECB and a number of ECB models developed over the last two decades. This provided a framework for examining the similarities and differences between EtE

and ECB. A further comparison between impact measurement in the UK helped to locate EtE within a UK context of evaluation policy and practice. In addition, an expert interview aimed to verify current evaluation practice and policy trends influencing evaluation in Scotland. Finally, based on learning from this study, a number of development points were identified to refine the EtE Model prior to field testing.

### 3.3 Defining Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB)

The study by Labin et al. (2012) defines ECB as “an intentional process to increase individual motivation, knowledge and skills, and to enhance a group or organisation’s ability to conduct or use evaluation.” (p. 308). This definition of ECB is based on common features they identified from the theoretical literature which advocates ECB as an activity separate from conducting evaluations, and as an activity at organisational and individual levels. These authors also drew on collaborative, participatory and empowerment evaluation where building capacity is central to achieving outcomes and improvement. The Labin et al. (2012) study was a key research synthesis that brought together a growing body of theoretical and empirical studies on the development of ECB models and practice. Their methodology involved establishing a definition for ECB and building a composite ECB model from existing theory to provide a framework for selecting and analysing empirical ECB literature. Their study set out to examine how the practices of ECB matched or were consistent with theoretical ECB concepts that have emerged in recent years. The study used a broad-based approach to examine examples of ECB from a range of materials including published articles and book chapters. An initial search focused on articles that matched the definition of ECB (n=149). This was narrowed to focus on empirical studies (n=61). For example, empirical articles by Hoole and Patterson (2008) and O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan (1998) reviewed have also been included in the earlier literature review (Section 1.4.4, p.39). Articles and chapters that focused on ECB theory and models were excluded. They found that there was a high degree of consistency in what was reported in the empirical literature and theoretical ECB concepts. For example: the reported outcomes or

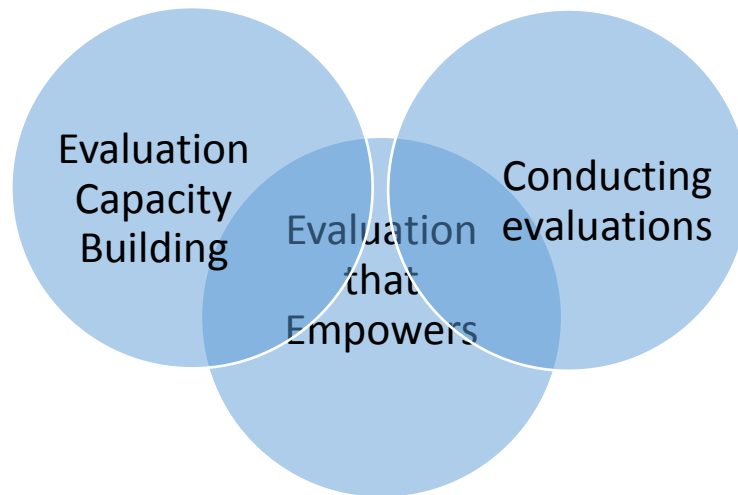
results of ECB at organisational level included improved or changing practices, leadership, culture, mainstreaming and resources, and at the individual level changing or increasing evaluation attitudes, knowledge and behaviours. In addition, from the empirical studies they highlighted the importance of collaborative and participatory processes *“collaboration emerged as the essential thread in the fabric of ECB efforts, warranting its explicit inclusion as a key concept in ECB models”* (Labin et al., 2012, p. 324). This study provides an important landmark in establishing ECB as both theoretical concept and practice. It also provides a reference point for scrutinising the EtE Model for its relatedness to ECB, differences or distinctiveness of EtE and identifying gaps that EtE does not address. Based on the Labin et al. (2012) definition of ECB, I have used their factors that define ECB to identify how well the EtE Model fits as a model of ECB. Table 16 shows the links between ECB features and the EtE Model.



**Table 16 EtE in relation to Evaluation Capacity Building – defining features**

<b>Factors for defining ECB (Labin et al. 2012)</b>	<b>EtE Model (Greenaway, 2013)</b>
An activity separate from conducting evaluations.	EtE is a framework for organisations and individuals to critically review their evaluation practices. As such it seeks to bring together evaluation capacity building and conducting evaluation.
An activity at organisational level.	EtE is a framework for evaluation-mindedness or the capacity for an organisation to create a deep and sustainable change in how it thinks about, plans for and embeds evaluation practices into its day to day actions.
An activity at individual level.	Through EtE individuals develop the skills and confidence to: a) Be actively engaged in evaluation decision making processes and activities and b) Have a voice in asking and answering important evaluative questions. 'Individuals' refer to a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.
Based on collaborative, participatory and empowering principles.	EtE is participatory where stakeholders are involved in evaluation at different levels and empowering when increased skills and confidence lead to ownership, independence and increased capacity.

There is a clear connection between Labin et al's (2012) definition of ECB and the EtE Model, particularly on the explicit inclusion of participatory and empowering processes. Also ECB and EtE both apply to individual and organisational levels. However, there seems to be a distinction where EtE aspires to be an evaluation of evaluation processes or meta-evaluation. EtE also overlaps with conducting evaluations. For EtE, conducting evaluation is a catalyst for engaging with and triggering wider benefits and outcomes from evaluation, including evaluation capacity building. A key question that this discussion raises is what comes first or what is the starting point for individuals and organisations developing their evaluation capacity? Is it conducting evaluation or is it evaluation capacity building or is there a mutual overlap? Figure 7 attempts to show how these concepts relate to each other.



**Figure 7 Relationship between concept and definition of ECB and EtE**

It is clear that there are strong connections between EtE and ECB, but I am interested to explore these in more detail in order to clarify what is distinct about EtE.

### 3.3.1 Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) Models

For the purposes of their analysis, Labin et al. (2012) developed an Integrative ECB Model to ensure that practical and theoretical aspects of ECB could be fully integrated. Their model was based largely on Preskill and Boyle's (2008) Multidisciplinary Model of ECB, but also drew in empirical factors such as organisational/individual motivation and ECB outcomes and learning. The following ECB tools and concepts reflect an emerging ECB Model which is consistent with Labin et al's (2012) view of a developing theoretical ECB field.

The Readiness for Organisational Learning and Evaluation Instrument (ROLE) (Preskill & Torres, 1999) is based on self-assessment statements related to six major dimensions: Culture, Leadership, Systems and structure, Communication, Teams, and Evaluation. Participants respond using a Likert scale to assess how each statement relates to their organisation. The suggestion of preparation for ECB by developing internal organisational conditions implies a journey where achieving the

readiness conditions for ECB are a milestone. However, the assumption of pre-conditions implies that organisations may not be ready to engage with conducting evaluation activities. This may make evaluation appear unachievable and inaccessible, and require resources to be in place prior to evaluation action.

A checklist to guide organisational evaluation capacity building (Volkov & King, 2007) builds on the ROLE Instrument creating a tool for organisations to check how they measure up in their evaluation practices once they are up and running. Similar to ROLE the indicators emphasise the organisational conditions for establishing and practising evaluation and guide evaluation policy development in areas such as professional roles and staff development. The checklist provides a further milestone on the evaluation journey, which extends and develops the conditions highlighted in ROLE. Its focus is on organisational context, structure and resources but within this it does suggest the relational aspects of developing evaluation practices such as the need for supporting skills development and sharing learning.

Multidisciplinary Model of ECB (Preskill and Boyle, 2008) aims to guide the design and implementation of capacity building activities and to provide a reference point for research into this area. This is a theoretical model for ECB as opposed to an instrument or checklist. The model identifies learning strategies for ECB such as: training, coaching, technical assistance, involvement in evaluation, and links these strategies to elements that contribute to sustainable evaluation practice such as evaluation strategic plan, policies, procedures, frameworks and processes. These evaluation practices are aligned to Volkov and Kings' (2007) checklist, and like them places ECB within the wider context of organisations including leadership, culture, systems and structures and communication. This is an organisational learning model which connects the operational level where individuals learn about and develop evaluative behaviours, to the strategic organisational environment for supporting and enabling evaluation practice such as evaluation strategy and policy.

### 3.3.2 Comparing ECB models with EtE

Each of these models is consistent with Labin et al's (2012) definition of ECB as a distinct activity. The ECB activity is focused primarily on and led at the organisational level. The individual level is pragmatic in terms of learning evaluation skills and knowledge as a key aspect of ECB, but there is less explicit evidence of collaborative, participatory or empowering approaches, for example through the establishment of shared evaluation decision making and ownership. To understand differences and similarities I have set out the key aspects of the Multi-disciplinary ECB Model (Preskill & Boyle, 2008) alongside the EtE themes (Table 17).

**Table 17 Multi-disciplinary ECB Model indicators in relation to EtE (v2) Themes**

<b>Multi-disciplinary Model (Preskill &amp; Boyle, 2008)</b>	<b>Evaluation that Empowers (v2) (Greenaway, 2013)</b>
<u>Overarching aspects:</u> Leadership, Culture, Systems and structures, Communication.	Notion of <u>evaluation-mindedness</u> <u>Leadership</u> – clear leadership and direction for evaluation and encouragement of others to take on suitable evaluation leadership roles.
<u>ECB learning strategies</u> Training, Coaching, Technical assistance, Involvement in evaluation, Communities of practice, Internship, Written materials, Technology, Appreciative Inquiry, Meetings.	<u>Learning through evaluation</u> – prioritises and supports evaluation as a key organisational skills area, and uses a range of methods to support evaluation learning and development.
<u>Sustainable Evaluation Practice</u> Strategic plan for evaluation. Evaluation policies and procedures. Evaluation frameworks and processes. Resources dedicated to evaluation. Use of evaluation findings. Shared evaluation beliefs and commitment. Continuous learning about evaluation. Integrated knowledge management evaluation system.	<u>Purposes</u> – clearly defined purposes for evaluation and accountability to individuals, groups, funders and other agencies (its stakeholders). <u>Involvement</u> – different stakeholders involved in the evaluation process and plans practical ways for them to participate in all stages. <u>Learning from evaluation</u> – learning from the results and findings from evaluation. <u>Dissemination</u> – shares the findings and results from evaluation and celebrates successes and achievements. Organisation learns from its experiences.
	<u>Externality</u> – organisation recognises the importance of an external element in evaluation and plans practical ways to critically review evaluation results and practice.

The key indicators or aspects reflect the ‘headlines’ for each model and are short-hand for richer and more detailed meanings. Although this is a very simplistic comparison it does serve to highlight broad similarities and differences in the aspects incorporated into each of the models.

- The ECB model highlights the importance of organisational conditions, values, commitment, and strategic structures for supporting sustained evaluation capacity. EtE uses the notion of evaluation-mindedness to reflect an overall evaluation culture and focuses on the types of actions that may generate

helpful organisational conditions such as learning, involvement and shared leadership.

- The ECB model acknowledges the need for designated resources to support evaluation. Whereas EtE concentrates on human resources such as shared learning and motivation. This may be somewhat naïve and a potential gap is EtE's lack of a reference to explicit support resources, especially given the findings from the case study in Study 2 which highlighted the need to acknowledge staff time and financial costs of undertaking evaluation.
- Shared aspects across models include: leadership, learning from evaluation, and sharing and dissemination, although leadership within EtE is shared across evaluation activities and is not hierarchical.
- Whilst there is a shared focus on planning, EtE does not emphasise strategic planning.
- Distinct aspects of EtE include externality or the involvement of a critical external viewpoint and review process. Also the participatory involvement of stakeholders is a defining aspect of EtE.

Considering the above analysis points and discussion a number of differences can be surmised that show the distinctions between ECB and EtE. These are presented in Table 18.

**Table 18 ECB models and the EtE Model differences across a range of dimensions**

<b>Dimension:</b>	<b>Evaluation Capacity Building Models</b>	<b>Evaluation that Empowers Model</b>
Goal	ECB as an end in its own right e.g. specific strategy and plan. A primary focus for ECB is an explicit organisational development initiative.	Evaluation practices are a means to an end. Evaluation capacity building is a secondary focus. It is an additional outcome and benefit to the goal of conducting evaluations.
Outcome	The outcome is an organisation's consistent delivery of competent evaluation projects.	The outcome is the critical capacity for an organisation to respond, change and develop based on evidence and shared learning.
Approach	Establishes appropriate structural and organisational plans to guide communication, policy and to establish practices from which specific evaluations flow.  A 'top down' approach to developing organisational evaluation practices, although the processes within are designed to be collaborative e.g. peer learning, sharing and dissemination.	Approaches evaluation in a pragmatic way – doing evaluations, from which wider organisational value is generated and the use of evaluation and practices can develop.  An explicitly 'bottom-up' collaborative approach to developing evaluation. E.g. stakeholders (staff, volunteers, board members and service users) take on leadership roles and participate in evaluation decision-making.
Plan	A master plan – pro-active, strategic, and structural. Focused on organisational infrastructure, from which evaluation activity flows.	A pilot, experimental, exploratory, emergent activity – responsive, agile, practical and applied. Focused on the relational aspects of evaluation.
Emphasis	Emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the strategic location of evaluation;</li> <li>- the importance of leadership and commitment to resources.</li> </ul>	Emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- empowering individual and collective voices of internal and external stakeholders;</li> <li>- establishing power-sharing and collaborative evaluation relationships.</li> </ul>
Strength	Strengths lie in the status and recognition of evaluation as a core organisational practice at a strategic level and the subsequent commitment to dedicated resources that contribute to its sustainability.	Strengths lie in creating ownership, and generating enthusiasm and motivation for sustaining and developing evaluation as a core organisation practice at individual and organisation levels. Role of externality providing critical perspective.

Weakness	The potential to create and sustain ownership and participation at the individual level.	The potential for strategic influence from a practical and participatory starting point.  Lack of reference to strategic context and designated resources.
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In summary, it is clear that by definition, EtE does belong to the family of Evaluation Capacity Building models. However, EtE is distinct in its underlying approach which prioritises participation, collaboration and the belief that it is these empowering attributes that generate long term change in organisations. The comparison between EtE and ECB models highlights a key dilemma in terms of sustainability. For ECB models a strategic approach may make it difficult to maintain the conditions for participatory, collaborative and empowering aspects of evaluation. For example, the Study 1 literature review highlighted the existence of power relationships within organisations which raises questions about the authenticity of more democratic evaluation practices (Greenaway & Roberts, 2014). It raises the question of ‘whose agenda is it?’ For EtE, there may be a danger that in emphasising participation and individual involvement, it is more difficult to influence strategic priorities. For example, the Study 1 literature review highlights a problem of raising expectations of change from using more democratic and participatory evaluation approaches, and the potential disconnect between evaluation findings and how these are or are not influential at a strategic level. The dilemma for both ECB approaches and EtE is one of existing power relations within. Therefore, in developing EtE there is a need to recognise and incorporate a wider strategic and organisational aspect. Earlier in Study 3 a key question was raised about the starting point for individuals and organisations developing their evaluation capacity? From the above discussion it is clear that for ECB the starting point is ECB as a distinct strategic organisational strategy from which evaluations flow. For EtE the starting point is a critical awareness of an organisation’s need to conduct evaluations and respond to the demands of accountability from which learning informs change and skills development builds capacity. Whilst the concept of ECB is very helpful in reviewing and positioning EtE, it does not necessarily relate



the discussion to the particular context of evaluation in Third Sector Organisations in the UK. The next section now turns to this dimension for comparison.

### 3.4 Impact measurement and evaluation practice in the UK

A somewhat different approach to evaluation has been taken within the UK, where increasingly the primary focus has been on measuring (quantitatively and qualitatively) outcomes and impact. Evaluation capacity building is seen as a secondary focus and a means to an end. ECB does not feature as “an activity separate from actually conducting evaluations” (p. 308) as in Labin et al’s (2012) definition of ECB described earlier. Although the need for organisations to develop capacity, skills and knowledge to plan and measure outcomes and impact, does have implications for organisations’ ability to participate and engage in growing evaluation demands, especially from government and funders, to measure impact (Ellis & Gregory, 2008). A recent review of impact measurement practice in Third Sector Organisations in the UK (Harlock, 2013) explored understanding about impact and how it was being measured. Similar to the ECB literature review, this study involved a synthesis of different types of material including published papers, reports, and policy documents. This mix, the review asserted, reflected the relative newness of this field of knowledge and research. Whilst the review does not claim to be a formal systematic review of literature, it did set a framework for identifying and selecting relevant sources. Sources were all published between 2000 and 2013 and included a mix of a) commentaries on overall policy and practice development in Third Sector Organisations and b) primary research and evaluation exploring processes, practices and experiences. Although there are extensive references that suggest a broad study (n= 78) there is no indication of the number of commentaries and primary research consulted. The review did consider international sources but only if there was explicit reference to UK policy and practice, and while claiming to be a UK review, the material predominantly referred to policy and practice in England. The review was complemented with a series of interviews (n=6) with leading experts to test out findings and indicate future challenges for impact measurement practice in Third Sector Organisations in the UK.

Findings from this review highlighted how Third Sector Organisations evaluation practices, and especially impact measurement, are influenced by government and funder policy, and that activities related to impact measurement in Third Sector Organisations have increased significantly in the last decade. This finding is consistent with findings from the Study 1 literature review highlighting dilemmas facing Third Sector Organisations in the UK and Scotland. However, due to disparate understanding of what measuring impact means and what it involves, the review found that there was a wide variation of practices and quality of results being produced. Findings also identified a wide variation of evaluation practices particularly between large organisations (> £100k turnover) and small organisations (< £100k turnover). There were also variable and limited tools and support mechanisms available to Third Sector Organisations to support evaluation capacity building.

To explore the implications of evaluation policy and practice issues for Third Sector Organisations in Scotland, I arranged for an expert interview with the Chief Executive of Evaluation Support Scotland (a recognised authority on evaluation for Third Sector Organisations in Scotland). A summary of key points from this interview is included in Appendix 14. Consistent with other UK evaluation studies (Ellis & Gregory, 2008; Harlock, 2013) the expert interview identified that continuing drivers for evaluation in Third Sector Organisations were government and funders policy and the requirements from regulation for example quality assurance demands from government inspection. Findings from the interview highlighted the particular influence of high level government policy trends in the reform of public services. This has led to more emphasis on preventative actions in delivering public services, and an emphasis on an assets-based approach to evaluation practices. This means more Third Sector Organisations using self-evaluation to evidence outcomes and impact for themselves, or tackling the question – what difference are we making? This raises a number of challenges for Third Sector Organisations as noted by Harlock (2013), namely the variable capacity of Third Sector Organisations to engage with evaluation processes, and

organisations' variable understanding of what impact evaluation involves. In addition, the expert interviewee raised a concern about the difficulties in evaluating preventative actions, especially given the long term nature of preventative work and problems with attributing impact. The effect of these influencing factors are on the one hand greater validation of self-evaluation approaches used by Third Sector Organisations, and on the other hand highlight the need for increased skills development or evaluation capacity building.

One initiative that was identified to explicitly develop evaluation capacity in Third Sector Organisations in the UK was the Inspiring Impact Network. [Inspiring Impact \(II\)](#) (2013) is a UK initiative led by a collaboration of eight UK voluntary sector organisations which aims to change the way the UK voluntary sector thinks about impact. II has developed a number of strands including a Code of Good Impact Practice, a diagnostic tool for organisations to review their practice, an impact evaluation tools data base, ways to share learning about impact measures across sectors, and is also addressing the role of funders. This is a broad approach to impact measurement within which impact evaluation capacity building is a key element. The Code of Good Impact Practice is based on eight sequenced principles that define good impact practice. II has also developed an online self-assessment tool (Measuring Up) that enables an organisation to review and improve its impact practice in the way it plans, evidences, communicates and learns from the difference that its work makes. These principles and tools together are implicitly a type of ECB model. Inspiring Impact matches Labin et al's (2012) ECB definition as a distinct activity, operating at the organisational and individual levels and based on principles of participation and collaboration. The 'Measuring Up' self-assessment tool uses a similar process to EtE in that it involves critically reviewing organisational impact practice. It uses a self-assessment based on the Code of Practice indicators of good impact practice, and encourages organisations to develop an action plan to improve areas of weakness. A recent review of the Inspiring Impact programme (Handley, Weston, & Kazimirsky, 2015) found that organisations had found the Code of Practice to be a useful resource for reviewing impact practice. Three quarters of those organisations using the guide reported

that they had planned improvements to impact evaluation planning, data collection and dissemination. The Measuring Up tool was found to help the majority of organisations using it to *“increase their skills, identify resources, clarify areas of strength and weakness and measure impact better”* (p. 10). A number of themes emerged in the action plans that organisations had developed from using Measuring Up. These included developing an evaluation framework, identifying or improving data collection methods, increasing consultation with beneficiaries, and building evaluation into the strategic plans of the organisation. The review found some evidence of organisations implementing actions but that time was a limiting factor. To assess the longer term impact of the Code and Measuring Up there would need to be further follow-up with organisations. This review provides valuable insights into the Inspiring Impact programme in practice. It highlights the pragmatic character of the programme in its focus on the methods and practice of impact evaluation – the how to ... type information and guidance especially in relation to planning, implementing, reporting and disseminating impact evaluation projects. The review also provides a reference point for planning and checking the results at the field testing stage of EtE, for example the type of actions for evaluation improvement, and the success and challenges for completing actions longer term.

### 3.4.1 Comparing impact measurement models with EtE

In relation to EtE, a key question is how is it different from Inspiring Impact? Table 19 compares the Code of Good Impact Practice principles and the Measuring Up process alongside the EtE themes.

**Table 19 Code of Good Impact Practice, Measuring Up and the EtE Themes**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Code of Good Impact Practice (Inspiring Impact, 2013)</b>	<b>Measuring Up (Inspiring Impact Diagnostic tool, 2014)</b>	<b>Evaluation that Empowers (v2) (Greenaway, 2013)</b>
Key indicators or aspects that define model	Taking responsibility for impact and encourage others to do so.	Plan: Agreeing the difference you want to make, how you will make this difference and how you plan to measure it.	Leadership.
	Focus on purpose.		Purposes and accountability.
	Involve others in your impact practice.		Stakeholder participation and involvement.
	Apply proportionate and appropriate methods and resources.	Do: Collecting information and data that evidence impact.	
	Consider the full range of the difference you actually make.	Assess: Analyse data to assess the impacts made, including acknowledging impacts not met.	
	Be honest and open.		
	Be willing to change and act on what you find.	Learn: Learning from findings to inform future plans and services.	Learning from and through evaluation.
	Actively share your impact plans, methods, findings and learning.		Sharing and dissemination.
			Externality.

This comparison identifies a number of highlights.

- The Code's principles reflect a pragmatic list and sequence which would complement the ECB models. The Code is not explicitly contextualised within wider organisational structures nor does it emphasise a strategic approach to evaluation capacity building. It focuses on the specific impact evaluation actions of an organisation. Although strategic planning action did emerge at the action planning stage for organisations (Handley et al, 2015).
- It shares common principles with EtE such as the focus on purpose, involving others, learning from and through evaluation and sharing findings.

- The Code follows a linear pathway which implies that organisations follow a sequence. This is mirrored in the process cycle used in the Measuring Up tool. EtE is not linear or a sequential cycle. Organisations can choose to engage with themes that are most relevant to their needs knowing that all the themes connect and influence each other. Change actions in one theme will influence the whole. This is an interesting distinction and one that can be explored during the EtE field testing phase.
- One key distinction of EtE (as for ECB models) is the inclusion of the externality theme and its role in facilitating critical review of evaluation practice.
- A further area that II does not seem to emphasise is the participatory nature of organisational and individual involvement. This seems to be more implicit within the Measuring Up tool as opposed to being highlighted as a key ingredient in generating ownership of impact review and actions within organisations.

In summary, it would seem that there are common themes running through II and EtE in terms of a shared goal to improve organisation evaluation practices.

Distinctions seem to lie in the emphasis on the participatory nature of EtE, the emphasis on starting with the organisations priorities as opposed to following a sequence and the inclusion of the externality theme to enhance critical review.

### 3.5 Conclusion

There are similarities that show that EtE is a type of evaluation capacity building model. There are shared outcomes of sustainable organisational and individual evaluation practices, but there are also distinct differences. These primarily come from EtE's explicit attention to participation and empowerment approaches and the relational aspects between individuals and the organisation. These contribute to shared ownership and a critical capacity for an organisation to respond, change and develop. This distinction perhaps fits with a gap noted by Labin et al (2012). They

pointed out how the theoretical ECB literature emphasises the importance of motivation and positive attitudes towards evaluation, whereas the empirical literature stressed the limitations and difficulties created through negative attitudes towards evaluation. They suggest there is a need to consider how to develop more positive evaluation attitudes and to understand negative attitudes better. Potentially Labin et al's (2012) recognition of collaboration and participatory processes at all stages of ECB may provide a more productive environment for addressing this gap.

A further distinction of the EtE Model is the inclusion of the externality theme. This theme introduces an external element or role to the evaluation process adding credibility, objectiveness and increasing the potential for critical review and learning. This external role can provide direct input to an evaluation and can also provide technical expertise, support, and facilitation. This is similar to Preskill and Boyles' (2008) learning strategies. However, this role can change as the organisation increases its evaluation capacity which can result in greater ownership and direction of the evaluation processes. This was apparent for the case study in Study 2 where staff commented on the changing role of the external evaluator and was evident in the subsequent actions taken independently by the organisation. Crucial to the constructive use of externality are trusting relationships between the organisation, its staff and the external evaluator or peer. This highlights a subtler external role of guide and critical friend. In addition, externality acknowledges the potential for wider stakeholder input and feedback to critical review processes.

The comparison between EtE and ECB models, the Code of Good Impact Practice and Measuring Up also highlights a key dilemma in terms of sustainability. For ECB models a strategic approach may make it difficult to maintain the conditions for participatory, collaborative and empowering aspects of evaluation. For EtE, there may be a danger that in emphasising participation and individual involvement, it is more difficult to influence strategic priorities. This strategic positioning, or lack of, is also evident in the Code of Good Impact Practice. Labin et al. (2012) do not raise this dilemma explicitly, but they do suggest that there is a fundamental relationship

between organisation outcomes (leadership, culture, mainstreaming, practices and resources) and individual outcomes (attitudes, knowledge and behaviours) and suggest that “an organisational environment conducive to evaluation was necessary to increase individual motivation and behavioural change” (p. 328). The inclusion within EtE of an additional organisational environment theme may help to address this gap. The discussion about strategic approaches to change versus practical and responsive approaches to change has introduced a new dimension to the EtE Model. Using language like agile, lean, responsive, exploratory and emergent are consistent with Agile methodology (<http://agilemethodology.org/>) an approach to product development from the software industry. Sequential or ‘waterfall’ or linear processes are regarded as ineffectual because of the need to complete one stage before the next and so on. This linear approach is characterised by poor inter-communication and involvement between team members. The Agile methodology encourages a process of short iterations to enable responsive and adaptive developments to any single product and better communication between those involved. Agile methodology also uses participatory and empowering approaches to include stakeholders. Further investigation of this strategic – participatory relationship could be explored in the EtE field testing phase.

A further question that this analysis raised for EtE is concerned with scope and relevance in terms of whether EtE can be scaled up to meet the needs of large organisations or whether it is distinctly a tool for small organisations. The EtE characteristics of exploratory, responsive, applied and agile suggest that EtE could be applied in all organisations. This question could be explored more fully through the sampling criteria used to select case study organisations during the field testing phase of the EtE Model.

In summary, from this review a number of development points have been identified for taking EtE forward into the field testing phase. These include:

- adding an additional theme to acknowledge the wider organisational context or environmental conditions which enable or limit evaluation capacity building;

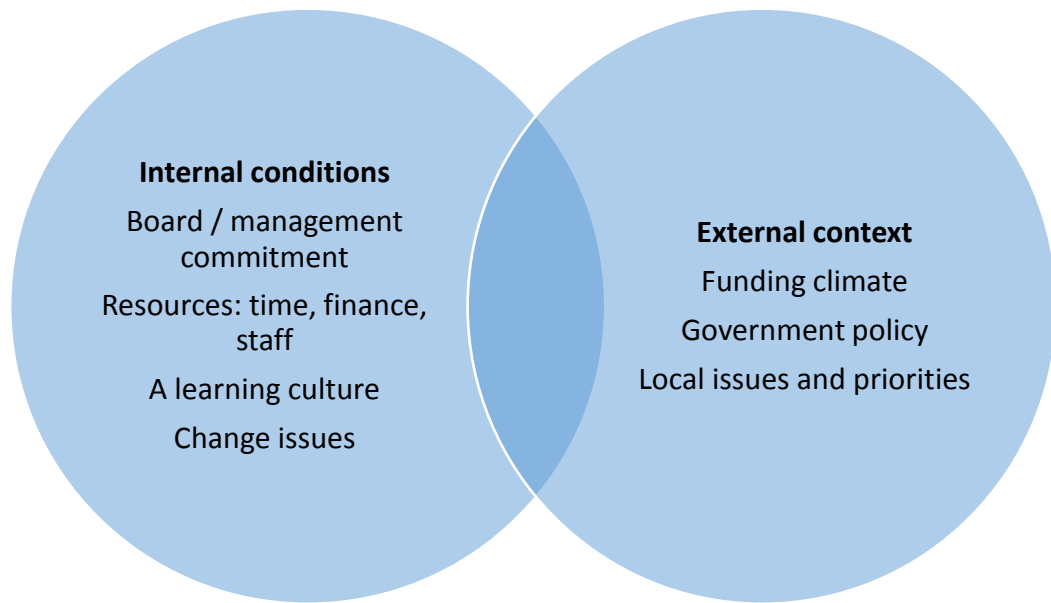


- using a sampling strategy for the field testing phase that explores the scalable potential of EtE for example including medium and large organisations;
- exploring the effects of change actions in one theme on other themes amongst organisations in the field testing phase or the non-linear approach versus the linear approach;
- exploring and defining factors that distinguish EtE from ECB models and the II programme in practice for example the participatory nature of EtE and the externality theme;
- exploring the sustainability of evaluation improvement actions over time such as what factors help sustain actions and what are the limitations or challenges.

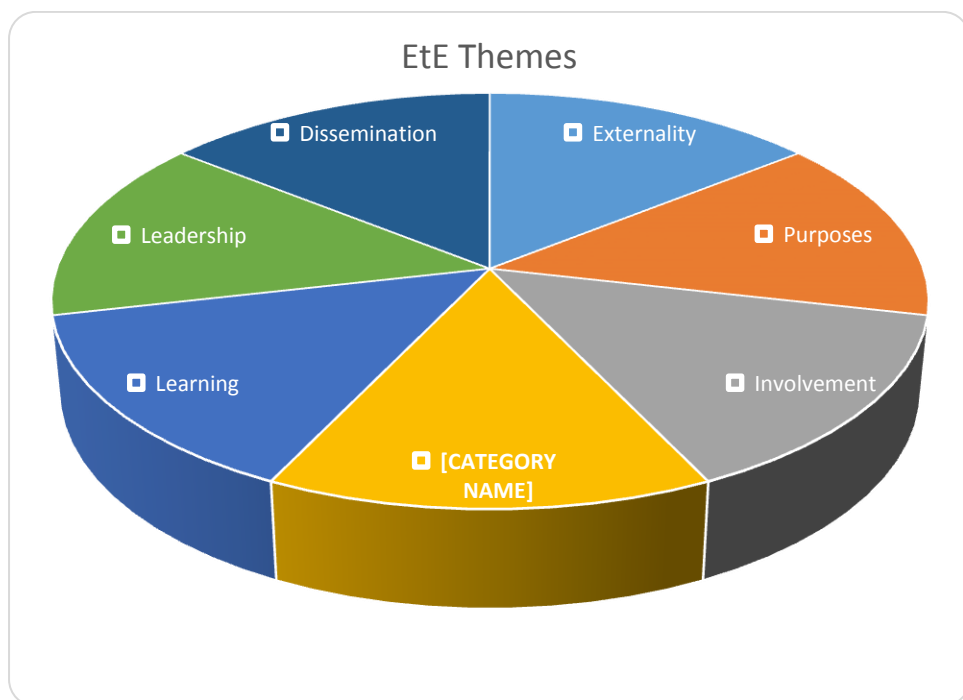
### 3.5.1 The EtE Model (v3)

The main revision to the EtE Model as a result of Study 3 was to develop an additional theme in relation to the organisational context or environment. The purpose of this theme was to reflect the position of evaluation and evaluation practices within a wider environmental context. EtE, like all evaluation projects and activities, is a tool to be used to inform about, report on, learn from and discover aspects of importance to organisations. Evaluation exists in the context of organisations. It is part of the bigger picture and its effectiveness is influenced by internal organisational factors such as the board or senior management's commitment to learning and evaluation, prioritising resources, etc., and external organisational factors such as funding, government policy and local priorities. These internal and external conditions can support or limit the environment for evaluation (Figure 8). Within this wider organisational context, EtE can support the development of agile, lean and responsive evaluations, which can remain as individual discrete projects or can provide a catalyst for evaluation capacity building.

The revised EtE Model themes (v3) are shown in Figure 9 to include the additional 'context' theme. In Study 4 the EtE Model (v3) is developed into a practical toolkit for field testing in organisations.



**Figure 8 Internal conditions and external context that affect evaluation in organisations**



**Figure 9 EtE Themes including additional 'context' theme (v3)**

## Study 4 Evaluation that Empowers in Action: Development and field testing the EtE Toolkit

The EtE Model (v3) has been developed from a number of theoretical and empirical stages. Study 4 of my research involved converting the model into a practical toolkit which was tested within organisations. This final study also provided an opportunity to explore further the points raised in the previous study: widening the scope for using EtE in larger organisations, exploring the relationship between the themes, and learning more about the sustainability factors for organisations improving their evaluation practices. There was also potential to learn more about the relationship between evaluation capacity building and the EtE Model in action. Study 4 involved developing a set of practical materials or toolkit based on the EtE Model (v3) and field testing the EtE Toolkit in a range of organisations. This process is reported in the next sections as follows:

Study 4a The Development of the EtE Toolkit (v1)

Study 4b Field Testing the EtE Toolkit (v2)

## Study 4a Development of the EtE Toolkit

### 4a.1 Introduction

The overall aim of Study 4a was to develop and refine a prototype website and toolkit based on the EtE Model (v3). The objectives were:

- to design a prototype EtE website and practical toolkit (v1);
- to consult a focus group of practitioners on the prototype design and usability;
- to improve the prototype based on practitioner feedback;
- to prepare the EtE Toolkit (v2) ready for field testing in organisations.

### 4a.2 Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach based on development research and prototyping which has been used to inform this study, and highlights the important role of formative evaluation.

#### 4a.2.1 Development research and prototyping

In developing the EtE Toolkit I have drawn from the field of educational design and development research where systematic approaches are applied to designing practical solutions or interventions to complex problems (Van den Akker, 1999; Nieveen, 2010). Van den Akker (1999) suggests there are benefits from using “*more evolutionary (iterative, cyclic, spiral) approaches, with integrated research activities to feed the process (both forward and backward)*” (p. 2). Nieveen (2010) also refers to an iterative relationship in what he terms a “prototyping approach” (p. 89) where he highlights the dual aim of achieving high quality programmes, products and/or processes alongside a set of well-articulated design principles. Although development research ideas have been broadly applied across aspects of education such as learning and instruction, there are some clear characteristics of this

approach that are useful to this study. These design principles were used to design the EtE Toolkit and process based on the EtE Model.

- Informing the decision making process during the development of any product or programme in order to improve it.
- Using an iterative approach to theory building where practical know-how and theoretical knowledge interact and alternate to inform and develop coherent theories in action.
- Linking my roles of designer, developer and researcher. Where they are the same person there is a stronger potential for professional development and learning through the process (Van den Akker, 1999). However, this closeness of relationship between the designer/developer/researcher roles can lead to problems where the developer is reluctant to hear critical views and comments, and participants in field tests might find it difficult to give critical feedback when they are aware of the effort invested by the developer (Nieveen, 2010).
- Balancing between creative input and critical review where creative design should be the strongest voice during the early stages of a research development project, and the critical review voice should be strongest towards the end of a project for example during the field testing and refinement stages.

Formative evaluation is a key activity during these iterative development processes as it provides feedback for informing the learning process generating a rich source of feedback on any problems early on in the development stages. There is a real advantage in being able to tap into this feedback quickly and to utilise improvement ideas. This is achieved by working with small samples of target users where the goal is for rich and informed feedback. Any concerns about the authority of the feedback can be checked using triangulation of views from different perspectives for example, expert views, wider user audiences, different data gathering methods and field testing. Table 20 shows how the sequence of this study relates to a development research approach.

**Table 20 Study 4a Methodological sequence in relation to development research**

Development research approach	EtE – Overall research approach
<p><b>Preliminary investigation</b> – a systematic investigation of task, problems, and context. Typical activities include: literature review, consultation with experts, analysis of similar examples, case studies of existing practices.</p> <p><b>Theoretical embedding</b> – systematic efforts are made to articulate the rationale and theoretical concepts of the intervention.</p>	<p><b>Theoretical model development</b></p> <p>The EtE theoretical model was developed iteratively through literature review (v1) and empirical testing using a case study (v2). Further investigation examining literature and seeking expert views were used to align or place the EtE Model within the current context for evaluation (v3).</p>
<p><b>Empirical testing</b> – evidence of the usefulness of the intervention is sought from the intended target group in real user settings.</p>	<p><b>Study 4a EtE prototype development</b></p> <p>This involved building a prototype based on the theoretical ideas of EtE and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the EtE website;</li> <li>- a ‘throw-away’ version of the EtE Toolkit;</li> <li>- improving the EtE website and Toolkit v1 based on focus group feedback.</li> </ul> <p><b>Study 4b EtE Field testing</b></p> <p>Field test EtE Toolkit (v2) in organisations.</p>
<p><b>Documentation, analysis and reflection on the process and outcomes</b> – attention is given to documenting the iterative process as a means of evidencing robustness. Key indicators are used to measure success. Formative evaluation is a key activity.</p>	<p><b>Findings and Analysis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- documenting the iterative development of EtE through the research processes;</li> <li>- findings from organisations’ feedback of EtE;</li> <li>- case study examples of EtE application in range of organisations</li> </ul>

There are a number of challenges associated with development research projects. The subjective closeness to the project is described above. Another challenge is the limited scope for generalising the findings from the formative evaluation to a wider population especially when the project is likely to involve small but purposive samples. In this study it was important to present a coherent product complete with a clear rationale or design principles and feedback from the formative evaluation participants. Presenting the ‘facts’ to other potential users, including policy makers, could enable them to decide how well the EtE Toolkit was relevant

to other contexts (Nieveen, 2010). The use of case studies of the product in action was also designed to inform potential future users of the value and application of the EtE Toolkit. In this study these challenges were addressed through the research design for example: recruitment of participant organisations by inviting organisations to actively choose into the project. The subjective closeness of the researcher to the project was resolved during the field testing where organisations self-managed the EtE Toolkit process independent of myself as the original developer/researcher. In addition, data collection from each organisation was designed to test the process and to create case study examples.

Formative evaluation is a key activity of a research development or prototyping approach. In this study evaluation was concerned with the systematic assessment of the design and application of the EtE Toolkit prototype. The goal was to learn about and improve the EtE Toolkit (the process and product). As the prototyping process proceeded there was a shift in emphasis from validity to practicality to effectiveness. This shift helped to shape the focus and questions at each stage of the evaluation. Table 21 shows how each of the formative evaluation processes translate into questions and how these relate to evidence sources for this study.

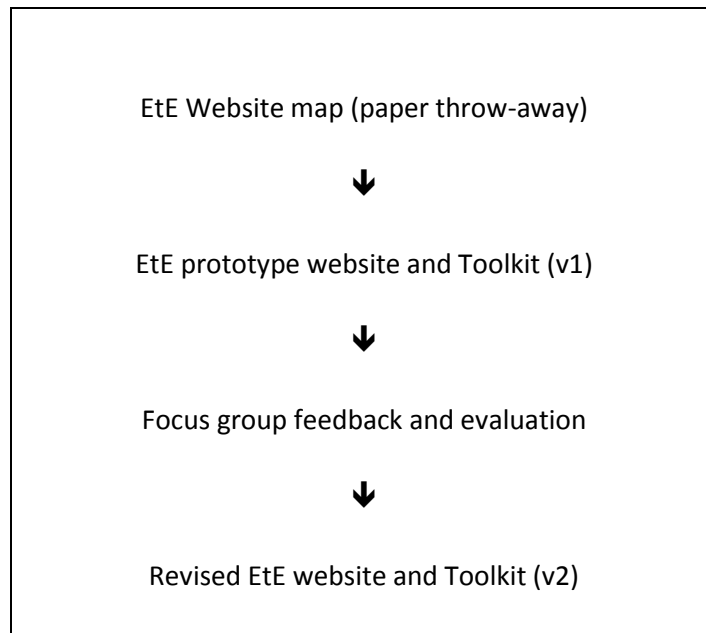
**Table 21 Study 4a Evaluation focus, questions and methodology in relation to EtE prototype development**

<b>Focus of formative evaluation/ quality test</b>	<b>Key evaluation question/s</b>	<b>EtE prototype development methodology</b>
<b>Content validity</b>	Does the process/product utilise up-to-date knowledge?  Do the different component parts connect logically?	- Focus group feedback.
<b>Practicality (expected and actual)</b>	To what extent do typical users consider the product to be useful and appealing?	- Focus group feedback.
<b>Effectiveness (actual)</b>	To what extent do the expectations and outcomes of typical users match the stated aims and outcomes of the product?	- Field testing in different organisational settings (study 4b). - Case study findings.

Although formative evaluation is focused on learning about the process or product, it was also helpful to consider some useful market research pointers such as the needs of the target users. This was especially important for aligning the EtE Toolkit with actual needs, expectations and current practices, and also for identifying the key features that would be attractive to the target users. Trott (2005) distinguishes the basic and articulated needs of the target audience from what he calls the “exciting” (p. 449) needs, or those that make the product distinct and surprise the users in a way that engages them further. This study has used this framework to design and inform the prototype development.

Prototyping is the process of developing a product through a series of iterations. The notion of a prototype as an approximation of a product under development. This may be in the form of a diagram or model, or a physical prototype in the form of a representation of the product (Ulrich & Eppinger, 2003). For example, using a ‘throw away’ prototype during the early stages of development can help to communicate an overall impression of how an idea works. This process means that early design issues can be addressed prior to producing a physical prototype. One of the main benefits is the capacity for learning about how the product works in practice and as a tool for communicating ideas to key target audiences (Ulrich & Eppinger, 2003). In this study, the EtE Model v3 was converted into a prototype which included a website designed to assist users with the conceptual framework of the EtE Model and a practical toolkit designed to guide organisations through the EtE evaluative conversation. Figure 10 shows the overall sequence used to develop the EtE website and Toolkit (v1) prototype.





**Figure 10 The EtE website and Toolkit prototype development sequence**

The prototype design also took into account the look and accessibility which make the intervention appealing and easy to use. In the first instance, an outline EtE website map was produced to visually depict the theoretical ideas of the model (See Figure 11). This was used to inform the EtE website and EtE Toolkit (v1) which were improved based on focus group feedback to produce the EtE Toolkit (v2) ready for the field testing phase.

## Evaluation that Empowers – tools for developing evaluation-minded organisations

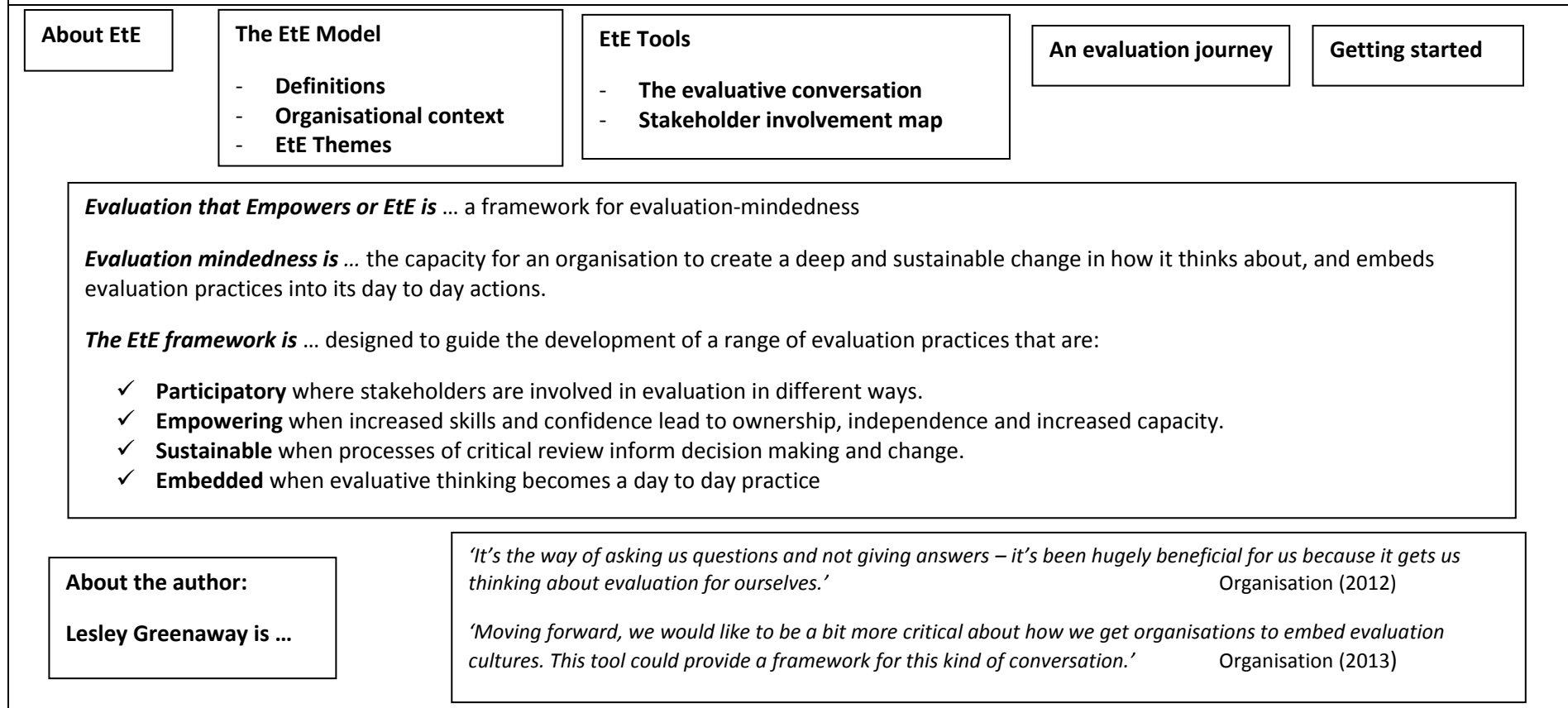


Figure 11 EtE map or 'paper throw away' to guide initial website development

#### 4a.2.2 EtE prototype website and Toolkit (v1)

The website map was used to inform the design of the EtE website (v1) shown in Figure 12. This was developed by the researcher using WordPress. It is a private website designed for a) informing focus group participants about the EtE research project and b) generating feedback during the focus group to inform further design elements prior to field testing.



**Figure 12** Screen shot of EtE website (v1)

The EtE Toolkit (v1) was also developed for initial review and feedback with the focus group. This consisted of an A3 folded paper resource sheet and a set of EtE theme question cards (Appendix 15 The EtE Toolkit v1). The EtE process was described as an 'evaluative conversation' which involved groups responding to four key questions in relation to their evaluation policy and practice: What are our strengths? Where will we begin? What could we do? and What will we do? Figure 13 is a guide to 'how to have an evaluative conversation?' which was used within the EtE Toolkit (v1).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to have an Evaluative Conversation?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Familiarise yourselves with the 7 EtE themes.</li> <li>2. Choose the first theme that you want to explore.</li> <li>3. Together, consider and discuss the self-assessment questions.</li> <li>4. Decide which 'traffic light' best describes your organisation's strengths in this theme.</li> </ol> <p><b>RED</b> We are not very good at this.</p> <p><b>AMBER</b> OK, but this is an area we could improve on.</p> <p><b>GREEN</b> This is one of our strengths.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Continue until you have reviewed all 7 themes</li> </ol>
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**Figure 13 Instructions for the EtE evaluative conversation**

#### 4a.2.3 Focus group

I used a focus group to test the practicality of the EtE website and EtE Toolkit, to evaluate its relevance and usability, and to inform revisions prior to the field testing phase. The focus group was made up of six practitioners who were recruited from a list of organisations suggested by Evaluation Support Scotland for their interest in and range of experience of evaluation. This group reflected typical expected users, that is they were from a mix of large and small organisations, voluntary sector and social enterprise, and included a mix of service providers, policy and networking organisations. Focus group participants were provided with information about the EtE research project by email (Appendix 16 Focus group participants email communication) and completed participant consent forms at the start of the focus group. The focus group activities involved a mix of group discussion, a structured review of the EtE website and a try-out of the EtE Toolkit. A topic guide was developed to guide the focus group process (Appendix 17 Focus Group Topic Guide). During the introduction an overview of the EtE research project was given (Appendix 18 Participant Information sheet), the focus group process was outlined and participant consent was obtained (Appendix 19 Participant consent).

The focus group participants introduced themselves and their experiences and interest in evaluation. This was also an opportunity to check their perceptions of current evaluation practice and policy issues, what they considered as the main challenges and what they saw as their individual and organisation strengths in tackling these issues. The practical review of the EtE website was structured to allow each participant approximately 30 minutes to explore the website. Each participant had brought with them a variety of devices for viewing the website including laptops and I-pads. They were asked to have a pad beside them and to make notes on aspects that they liked, aspects they did not like, any confusing elements or aspects they did not understand and to note any suggestions for improvement. At the end of the period individual feedback was collected and group discussion explored their collective views and comments. The EtE Toolkit (v1) in draft paper format was used for small groups to 'try out' the process by dipping into the different themes and questions to ascertain how they might relate to their organisation. Participants were also asked to comment on the overall EtE process as described in the draft toolkit. Again group discussion highlighted different aspects of the Toolkit and these were recorded for later reference. Finally, a whole group discussion explored their perceptions of the relevance of the ideas within the EtE Model and Toolkit and any limitations that they identified. The participants were thanked and offered to be kept informed about the EtE research project. Feedback from this group was recorded and used to inform and improve a revised version of the EtE website and EtE Toolkit (v2).

#### 4a.2.4 Ethical considerations

The main consideration for this group was to ensure that they were informed about their role, how their input was going to be used and to inform them that all digital recordings would be kept on a secure computer and deleted six months after completion of my doctoral studies. The identity of individuals and organisations was protected at the writing up stage. This study was approved by the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 20 Acknowledgement of ethics approval). The design and conduct of study have

benefited from academic scrutiny covering all recognised requirements including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, protection of research participants, assessment of risks and benefits, obtaining informed consent and finally, doing no harm.

### 4a.3 Findings

The following findings are a summary of feedback generated through the focus group discussions. Focus group participants reflected a mix of organisations from different sectors (see Table 22). They were experienced in evaluation and understood its value as a learning tool and in providing evidence for the improvement and development of services, policy and practice. Each participant was allocated a code which has been used in the following feedback to identify participant support.

Table 22 Study 4a Focus group participant codes and organisation profiles

Code	Type of organisation	Organisation purpose and focus group participant role
01	TSO Approx. 400 members Scotland-wide Care sector	Supports people with long-term conditions, their carers, and organisations that work with or for people with long-term conditions and is a strategic partner to the Scottish Government and the statutory sector. It ensures that people's voices are at the heart of policy and practice in social care. Provides evaluation support to projects to help them to self-evaluate their work for improvement and learning.
02	TSO Scotland-wide Care and health sector	Provides respite care through hospices, a home care service, and emergency care for children and young people with life-limiting conditions and their families. Part of role is to support senior management team to deliver a new outcome focused strategy for the organisation and to be able to evaluate it. Wants to find ways to embed evaluation in the management culture of organisation and involve stakeholders more.
03	Small TSO – approx. 35 groups Rural regional Youth work sector	Supports a network of volunteer led youth groups across a rural region of Scotland. Organisation is aware that groups are not able to evaluate their impact on young people very well and may be missing out on funding as a result.  Lead support officer is looking for a process to help youth groups to embed evaluation in their work.
04	Large TSO Approx. 1,500 members Scotland-wide Arts/ education sector	Organisation has a diverse portfolio of activities, e.g. award research funds, have enterprise schemes, an outreach programme to schools, large events, policy work – advises the Scottish Government and other institutions; and are accountable to a number of different public bodies. Responsible for evaluating the work of organisation. Evaluating such a diverse range of activities is challenging and requires an organisational approach.
05	TSO Local Care sector	A service organisation that provides support to families and children affected by parental imprisonment, drug and alcohol problems and school exclusions. Provide training for approx. 40 social workers per year. CEO - research is embedded in organisation e.g. evidence of need for services. See evaluation as part of the planning process, conduct annual evaluation that involves all stakeholders.

06	Social enterprise organisation  Local  Youth/employment/ sport sector	Employs 17 staff, involves 150 – 200 volunteers, has 300 young people per week using its services including employment training, sports and community activities. CEO - The current focus on outcomes based evaluation and reporting puts pressure on organisations and in conjunction with the diminishing pool of funding, if not done well, can result in an organisation being unable to demonstrate its worth to funders.
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#### 4a.3.1 Participant perceptions of evaluation issues and challenges

The participants highlighted a number of evaluation issues that they felt were challenging to their organisations. All participants considered that external evaluation was viewed by funders and decision makers as being more robust than internal evaluations. Participants reported their perception that hard data and proof of economic savings were main evaluation requirements (01, 05, 06). Social Return on Investment (SROI) was noted as a methodology favoured by the Scottish Government (06). However, participants pointed out that changes in government policy and direction meant that methods came in and out of fashion and organisations had to keep pace with these changes. They considered that internal evaluation helped to improve services (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06).

Related to these points participants identified different research and evaluation trends in health as different from those in social care (01, 02, 05). They reported that research and evaluation trends and models varied from setting to setting, e.g. drug trials, improvement science. Often a lot of evidence found by voluntary organisations is discounted because it does not fit with the current models being used for example it uses a more qualitative methodology (03, 05, 06). This is challenging for organisations working across sectors which was increasingly likely in current professional and funding environments (02, 04, 05).

Participants reported that for many organisations evaluation can seem like an imposition on an organisation and as a 'bolt-on' activity to main stream services (02, 03). This can be demotivating for staff and volunteers (02, 03) and building evaluation into the everyday work of an organisation is time consuming and



requires organisational commitment (02, 03, 04). All participants felt that more could be done to train staff and volunteers and build their capacity to do evaluations, value the process, and apply the learning.

The points raised by the focus group participants provide a small snapshot into the evaluation challenges facing Third Sector Organisations in Scotland. They are however consistent with findings reported in Study 1 especially related to the challenges of accountability and the power relationships of government and funders in determining policy and priorities. Feedback is also consistent with the views expressed during the expert interview regarding the continuing challenge for organisations to build evaluation skills and capacity especially in light of an emphasis on self-evaluation (section 3.4, p. 132).

#### **4a.3.2 EtE website feedback and evaluation**

Participants were asked to spend approximately 30 minutes on a tour of the website. They were asked to have a pad beside them and to jot down their immediate comments and reactions, what they liked and disliked. Focus group discussion highlighted the feedback presented in Table 23.

**Table 23 Study 4a Focus group feedback**

Focus group participants liked:	Focus group participants disliked:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the name - Evaluation that Empowers (01, 02, 03, 06);</li> <li>- its originality – there’s nothing else around that supports organisations to embed evaluation into their policy and practice (03, 06);</li> <li>- they can see themselves and team members using it (01, 02, 03, 06);</li> <li>- the model and most of its content (01, 02, 03, 04, 06);</li> <li>- the cleanness of the site and that there are no panels down the sides of the screen (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06);</li> <li>- the summaries at end of each of the themes (04,01,02);</li> <li>- the use of the term ‘lean thinking’ (06).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clunky language screen (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06);</li> <li>- having to dig down into site until you get to the questions that people really want to know about (01, 04, 05);</li> <li>- duplication of text and overlap between themes/ questions screen (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06).</li> </ul>

In addition, a number of suggestions for improvements were made.

- Focusing the front page so as to engage visitors for example: clarity of who it is for, promote the benefits of using EtE, link to the ‘conversation’ as quickly as possible, and include a call to action screen (02, 03, 04, 06).
- Consider the user experience for example the number of ‘clicks’ that a visitor will need to make to get through the website or to what interests them most, use plain English, be succinct, use short pages so that visitor does not have to scroll down, include any key definitions or use a jargon buster (01, 04, 06).
- There was a thought that the website could be more interactive for example an app would work well and the use of examples and case studies of organisations and individuals that have used EtE to illustrate how it works in practice.

- This last point highlights potential further development following the field testing stage where examples of EtE in action will be generated. Also the development of the website and its interactivity more professionally provides a future focus beyond this research study (03, 04, 06).

These points have been incorporated into revisions of the EtE website (v2) as preparation for Study 4b field testing (see Figure 14, p. 159).

#### 4a.3.3 EtE Toolkit feedback and evaluation

Participants also worked in small groups to explore a mock up version of the EtE Toolkit. Group discussion highlighted.

- **Facilitation of the evaluative conversation** – there was a view that the person leading the conversation would require a degree of facilitation skills to run the session and set ground rules. In addition, someone from the group could be identified to record the discussion (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06). A set of facilitator's notes would be useful and /or Top Tips for running a conversation.
- *"What delivers the magic is the quality of the conversation."* (06)
- **Traffic light system** – participants liked this simple approach to scoring/self-assessment, but felt that when given a choice of three possibilities people tend to opt for the middle ground. Consider using an even number of options (03, 04).
- **Questions** – participants felt that some questions are quite passive. Instead of 'in your organisation what purposes does evaluation serve?' it might be better to ask 'what's the purpose of evaluation in your organisation?' The questions have got to speak to the person, e.g. under 'Involvement' the question could be better if rephrased to 'who do you involve in your evaluations?' Make sure the language of questions is consistent throughout, clear who the questions are directed at, and easy to understand and answer (01, 03, 04, 06).
- **Scaling up its application** – participants felt that it could be valuable for large organisations as well as smaller ones. Teams could hold their own conversations and do a self-assessment and then feed their results and comments up to a coordinator at head office for collation and analysis at

organisation level (01, 02, 06). One of the participants (02) felt that the toolkit would work very well in the organisation and that they would take on the facilitator role.

Final comments from the focus group participants endorsed the ideas and process underlying the EtE Toolkit.

*“there is nothing like this out there.”* (03)

*“..... another way to demystify evaluation. Think about the audience.”* (01)

They felt that the EtE Model may help organisations to have a conversation with funders about how they approach evaluation that really demonstrates the difference that they make for their members and clients. It could be something that helps to shift the balance away from the focus on accounting to funders and more towards a learning organisation that is knowledgeable about its impact. This feedback was very helpful and was used to revise and develop the EtE Toolkit (v2).

## 4a.4 Revised EtE website and Toolkit (v2)

Figure 14 is a screen shot of the EtE website (v2). The main revisions can be seen in the page headings. In version 2 the headings are designed to take the viewer directly to the information that they want to get to such as: Is EtE for my organisation? and the 'Evaluative Conversation'. Use the link below to visit the website where other revisions have been made such as making the toolkit available to download and also an online checklist that organisations can use to make a record of their conversation.

[www.evaluationthatempowers.com](http://www.evaluationthatempowers.com)

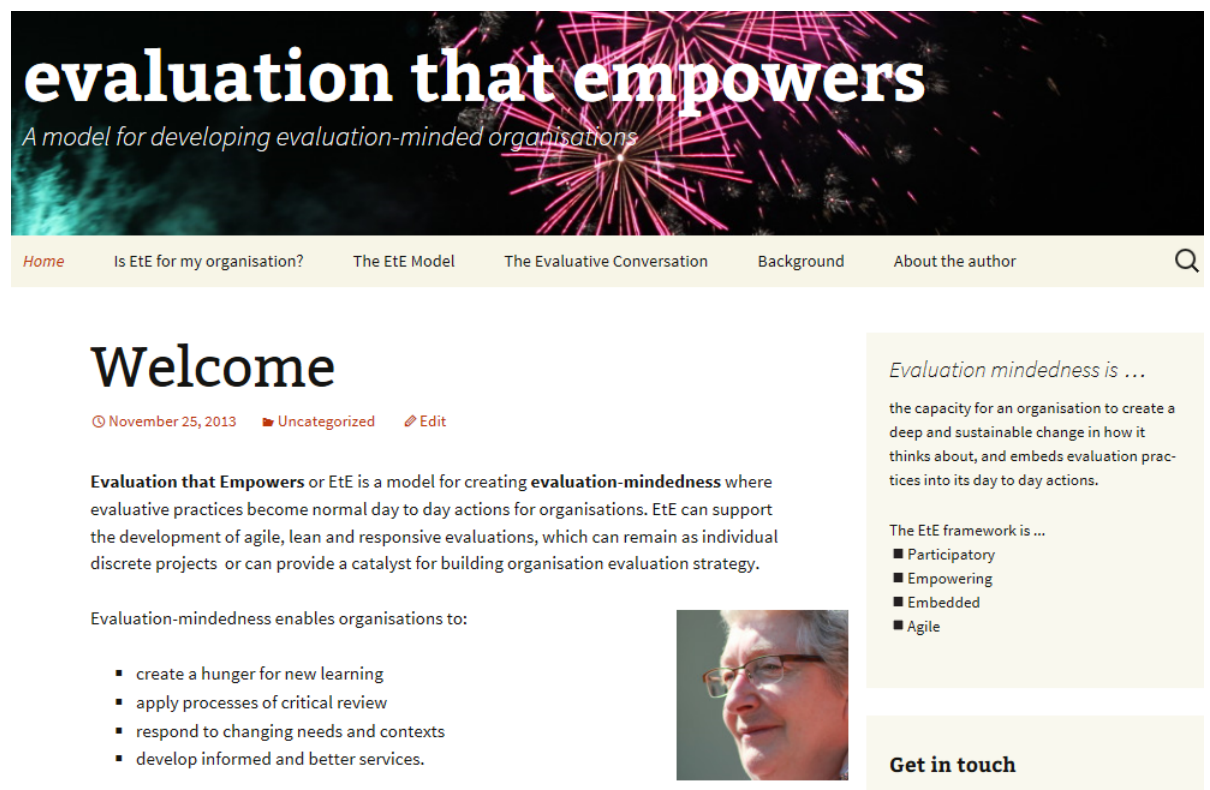


Figure 14 EtE website screenshot (v2)

Revisions of the EtE Toolkit included re-organising the materials into a set of one-page information and guidance sheets. Also included were a set of revised theme cards. Each card includes a summary of the theme on one side and the questions on the reverse. Figure 15 shows a collection of the Toolkit materials.

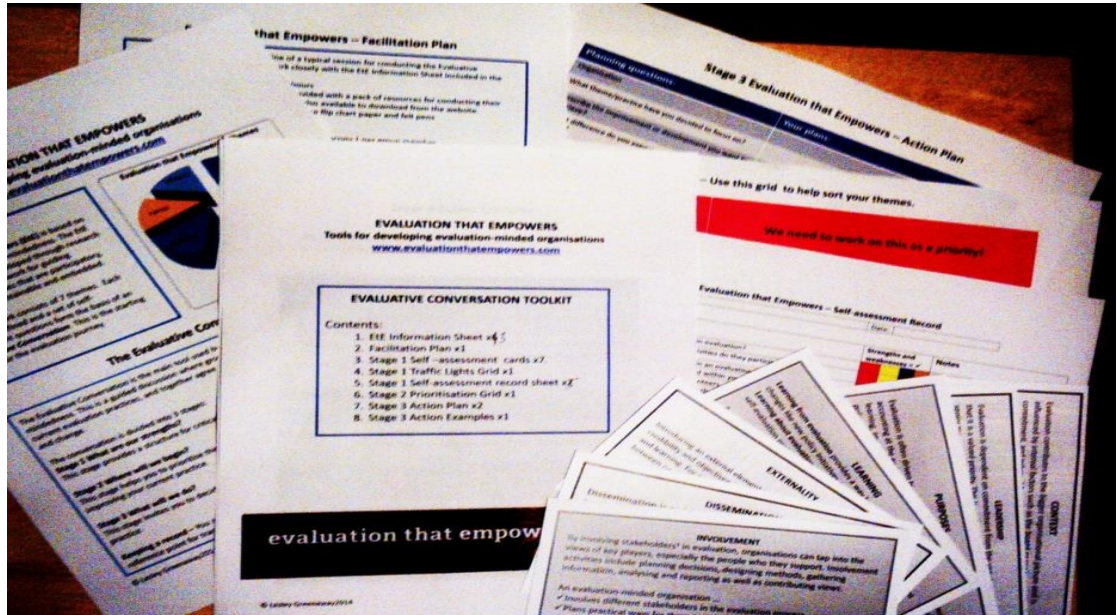


Figure 15 The EtE Toolkit (v2)

The revised contents of the Toolkit include:

1. EtE Information Sheet
2. Facilitation Plan
3. Stage 1 Self – assessment cards
4. Stage 1 Traffic Lights Grid
5. Stage 1 Self-assessment record sheet
6. Stage 2 Prioritisation Grid
7. Stage 3 Action Plan
8. Stage 3 Action Examples

A full EtE Toolkit (v2) pack is included as Appendix 21 (see back cover pocket).

## 4a.5 Conclusion

Study 4a described the processes used to design, develop and review the EtE Toolkit based on the EtE Model. The Toolkit has benefited from feedback from a focus group of Third Sector Organisation practitioners which has informed the Toolkit revisions. The Toolkit (v2) was now ready for field testing in a range of organisations and is reported in Study 4b.

## Study 4b Field testing the EtE Toolkit

### 4b.1 Introduction

The final part of my research aimed to field test the EtE Toolkit (v2)<sup>10</sup> in action within a range of organisations. The objectives were:

- to identify how these organisations used the EtE Toolkit to make changes to their evaluation practices;
- to explore how the EtE Model influences the evaluation discourse within these organisations;
- to explore and evaluate the usability of the EtE Toolkit from the perspective of different organisational settings;
- to identify points for developing the EtE Model and Toolkit in the future.

### 4b.2 Methodology

This section outlines an embedded multiple case study design used to investigate the research objectives. The study involved recruiting two participant organisations and facilitating the research process whereby each organisation independently carried out an EtE conversation within their organisational setting, and reported back on their experiences through a series of semi-structured focus groups carried out by myself as the researcher. The data collected were analysed in relation to the study objectives and provided the narrative for the case studies. The main focus for analysis was to respond to the study objectives principally at the organisation and team levels. However, it became apparent that for one individual their experience of participating in the EtE conversation had been personally significant. This suggested that a different and more person-related analysis method was needed. The data from this individual were analysed using the narrative analysis method described in *The Listener's Guide* (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). The results of the analysis are presented as case studies and are

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<sup>10</sup> Note that in Study 4b where the 'EtE Toolkit' is used it refers to the 'EtE Toolkit (v2)'.



used to explore the narratives of EtE in action at organisational, team and individual levels.

#### 4b.2.1 Case study design

This study builds on the case study design from Study 2 where a single case was used to explore and develop the theoretical ideas of the EtE Model. Study 2 used an iterative process to explore and develop the EtE Model. This study (4b) was designed to test the model further in different organisational situations. One key distinction was the shift from a single known organisation to two unknown organisations. A second distinction was the shift to researching empirical data where there was an unknown outcome, as opposed to documentary analysis of existing documents recording practice. A third distinction was the use of a more complex design using embedded case study to explore and analyse data at different levels. Table 24 reflects the development and application of the case study design between the two studies.

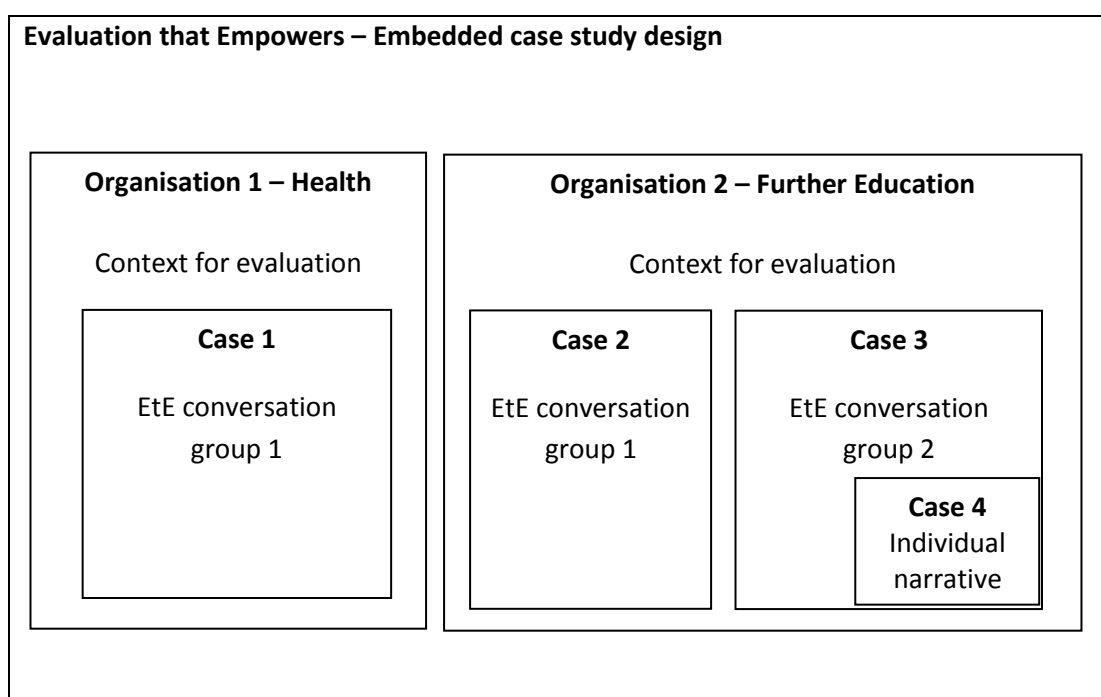
**Table 24 Development of case study design between Study 2 and Study 4b**

Case study design aspect	Study 2 Case study	Study 4b Case studies
Type of case study	Single exploratory case study.	Embedded multiple exploratory case studies.
Purpose	Exploratory, to confirm, challenge and extend EtE theoretical model.  Retrospective study looking back on evaluation practice.	Exploratory, to test EtE in action in different organisational situations.  To refine and develop model.  Prospective study of evaluation practices.
Case/s	Known Third Sector organisation working within local communities.	Unknown organisations recruited from different sectors, statutory health and education.
Data collection methods	Documentary analysis looking retrospectively at organisational evaluation practice in relation to EtE Model, and focus group with key stakeholders.	Semi-structured focus groups with key stakeholders at 3 designated time points over a 6-8 month period plus supporting documents created by the organisation through the research process.
Data analysis	Pattern matching: EtE theoretical model ↔ empirical evaluation practice of organisation.	Analysis framework based on study objectives and narrative analysis using the Listener's Guide.

**Embedded multiple case study design**

Where the case study design used in Study 2 provided a way to explore the particular phenomenon or theory of the EtE Model within one organisation, the use of an embedded design in Study 4b provided greater scope for exploring the EtE Model in action at more systemic levels. For example, for one organisation the data collected distinguished between the context for the organisation and its evaluation practice and the agreed focus or case study group. Similarly, for a second organisation, data collected reflected the broader organisational context for evaluation, and because this was a large and complex organisation, two service teams were identified. Within one of these teams there was potential to reflect an

individual narrative as a further sub-unit. The embedded case study design shown in Figure 16 reflects the embedded multiple case study design used for this study. Using this multiple case study design provided an opportunity to test the EtE Model in different contexts, and this strengthened the validity of the study by providing a means to reflect and compare how the EtE Toolkit operated in different contexts (Yin, 2014). Flyvbjerg (2004), arguing for the validity of case study research, endorses this approach and the value of what he terms “context-dependent knowledge and experience” (p. 421) generated through context rich cases.



**Figure 16 Study 4b Embedded multiple case study design based on Yin (2014)**

### **Recruiting participant organisations**

The study involved recruiting 2 organisations which were selected based on the following criteria:

- different sizes of organisation with a particular interest on testing the potential for scaling up the application of EtE;
- different sectors /type of organisation for example: health and education, particularly moving beyond the earlier testing in voluntary sector organisations;
- geographical locations within Scotland to facilitate easier access to organisations during the data collection process;
- a willingness to participate and ability to complete actions within a 6-month timescale.

A challenge for this study was trying to cover these criteria within a limited number of organisations. Originally, it was planned that there would be three organisations but Organisation 2 identified two very distinct departmental teams to do the testing with. The result of this was to decide to work with Organisation 1 as a single case study, and to use an embedded case study approach with Organisation 2. However, the most important criterion to get right for this study was the willingness of the organisations to participate given the length of involvement over a six-month period and the commitment of organisational resources of time and personnel to support the process. This meant that clear information needed to be provided to enable organisations to opt into the study knowing what was expected of them. It was a distinct advantage for the study that both organisations felt that there would be direct benefits to their organisations from their participation, but also a limitation to the study in that both organisations were predisposed to finding it useful. The final time scales agreed with each organisation also had to work around the internal commitments and priorities for that organisation, which meant that negotiation and awareness in relation to any organisational demands needed to be accommodated. Examples of these demands included: staff illness, changing personnel, external inspection in one organisation, and the organisation's timetable. The result was that there was

a tendency for the original study plans to slip in terms of agreed completion dates. However, to their credit both organisations kept to the original plan and saw through their commitment to the study. Organisational contexts are explored in more detail in the case studies (Section 4b.3, p. 167).

Organisations were recruited from networks where an open invitation to participate was circulated, for example the Further Education Quality Managers network. Organisations were contacted by email and provided with information about the study and what was required of them (Appendix 22 Email invitation to participate, Appendix 23 Participant Information Sheet). This included obtaining a signed organisational consent form and checking that organisations were not additionally required to seek ethical approval to participate from their own organisations (Appendix 24 Informed consent form). Organisations were asked to identify a key person as the main contact between the researcher and the organisation. During the first contact meeting with each organisation a plan was agreed for the best approach to facilitating the EtE Toolkit and ongoing contact arrangements. For example, Organisation 1 decided to have two contacts one was the conversation facilitator and the other was the conversation recorder, and to test the model initially within a smaller group. Organisation 2 decided to test the model initially with two different departmental teams. Organisation 2 identified an overall contact person, internal facilitators to support the process and the team managers. Both organisations thought that there was potential for the initial pilot to be rolled out more widely within their different contexts. Table 25 provides summary information about the participant organisations involved.

**Table 25 Study 4b Organisations participating in field testing of the EtE Toolkit**

Organisation	Type	Focus for study
<b>Organisation 1</b> is a public advisory group set up to provide a means of ensuring that the perspective of patients and the public is at the heart of improving patient care and experience in the health services.	Health/ Public sector	Focus of the study for Organisation 1 was a small group including sub-group chairs, the overall chair and a supporting manager.
<b>Organisation 2</b> is a multi-campus further education college. It supports approximately 30,000 full and part-time students offering a wide range of qualifications, study courses and leisure classes.	Further Education/ Public sector	Focus of study for Organisation 2 was two separate staff teams: Equality and Inclusion and Student Advice.

#### 4b.2.2 Data gathering process

The study involved tracking the progress of the pilot organisations at three key time points: the initial briefing stage, immediately after using the EtE Toolkit and approximately five months' post use. Prior to the briefing stage, organisation contacts were sent the [www.evaluationthatempowers.com](http://www.evaluationthatempowers.com) link and were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the EtE background and model. At the initial briefing stage organisation contacts were introduced to the EtE Toolkit and how it worked. They were encouraged to ask questions and to check their understanding of what was involved. The second time point (after using the EtE Toolkit) involved a semi-structured focus groups with the key organisation contact/s, and at the third and final time point (approximately 5-6 months after using the EtE Toolkit) semi-structured focus groups were arranged with the key organisation contact/s, and also with other participants that had been involved in the initial EtE conversation using the EtE Toolkit. Semi-structured focus group were chosen as an appropriate method for gathering rich data for mapping the pathway that each of the organisations experienced through using the EtE Toolkit. This flexible method was seen as particularly appropriate for generating more participant-led data.

The small numbers involved and the recurring focus group meetings enabled the researcher to develop a rapport with the focus group participants and to get a better understanding of the different contexts that they were operating in. Clearly, this does raise issues about researcher influence and bias, but the principal purpose of this study was to explore and investigate the EtE Toolkit in action and the effects or impacts that it brought about. These what, how and why questions were considered best achieved through the use of semi-structured focus groups (Stuart, Maynard & Rouncefield, 2015). A template was created to link specific questions to the study objectives. This helped to a) generate data in relation to the organisations' experiences during field testing and b) achieve the study objectives (see Table 26). Schedules were then designed for each of the three key time points to reflect the purpose at each point (Appendix 25, 26, 27, 28).

Table 26 Study 4b Template linking study questions to specific study objectives

Research objective	Key questions
To explore and evaluate the usability of the EtE Toolkit (v2) from the perspective of different organisational settings.	<p>How did your group organise the EtE discussion?</p> <p>Who was involved?</p> <p>How long did it take?</p> <p>Did you complete the process? If no, please explain.</p> <p>What was interesting?</p> <p>What was challenging?</p> <p>Were there any surprises?</p> <p>Which aspects of the conversation process worked well for your group?</p> <p>Which aspects of the conversation process did not work for your group?</p> <p>Please describe any improvements that you can suggest?</p> <p>Did using EtE make a difference for your group, and if so how?</p> <p>Why do you feel that EtE made this difference?</p> <p>Would you use EtE again and/or recommend it to other organisations and Why?</p> <p>What makes EtE distinct?</p>
To identify how these organisations used the EtE Toolkit (v2) to make changes to their evaluation practices.	<p>Which of the EtE Themes became the focus of the group's discussion?</p> <p>Was there a consensus within the group?</p> <p>Did you identify any areas for improvement?</p> <p>How are you planning to take forward any actions or ideas from the conversation?</p> <p>What has happened (evaluation-wise) since we last met?</p> <p>What has been the progress with the evaluation change actions that you planned?</p> <p>What have you achieved?</p> <p>What have been the challenges?</p> <p>How has the EtE process influenced these results?</p> <p>What difference has using EtE made to your personal evaluation practice?</p> <p>What difference has it made to the organisation's evaluation practice?</p>
To explore how the EtE Model changes, or contributes to, the evaluation discourse in these organisations.	<p>As a result of this pilot, to what extent do you feel that your group/organisation is:</p> <p>More motivated to learn through evaluation</p> <p>More motivated to learn from evaluation</p> <p>More able to apply processes of critical review</p> <p>More able to respond to changing needs and contexts</p> <p>More able to develop informed and better services</p> <p>More empowered and engaged with the evaluation process</p> <p>What next for evaluation in this organisation?</p>



The study objectives and related questions provided the primary framework for designing the focus groups, but through using a semi-structured approach, there was more flexibility for the participants to report the 'story' that was most important to them (Stuart et al., 2015). For example, one of the participants used an introductory question as a trigger for her to tell her story. This drifted away from the precise question being asked but revealed important personal experience as a result of participating in the EtE Toolkit. This individual story is presented separately in the findings (section 4b.3.5, p. 204). This participant-centred aspect is also reflective of the underlying values and theory of the EtE Model and EtE Toolkit, that participation in evaluation can empower individuals and help develop skills and confidence. Hence the focus groups were seen as more of a shared conversation which encouraged reflection on experience. This point is also in accord with a methodological concern raised by Silverman (2013) that the researcher needs to be clear about the status of focus group data. There is a question about whether data provides direct access to experience or whether data is seen as actively constructed 'narratives' reflecting on experience. Given the timing of the three key time points for this study, and especially the third key time point the data collected were more representative of actively constructed narratives. This is also consistent with a case study design and the analysis used to report the organisation and individual case studies. Table 27 describes the field testing data collection process and the purposes at each key time point. It lists the research instruments used at different points (Appendix 25 Time point 1 Organisation information questions, Appendix 26 Time point 2 focus group questions, Appendix 27 Time point 3 (a) focus group questions, Appendix 28 Time point 3 (b) EtE conversation participants focus group questions).

**Table 27 Study 4b EtE field testing data collection process at each time point**

<b>Key time points for collecting</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Data collecting tools</b>
Time point 1	To introduce the pilot process.  To record initial organisation information.  To introduce the EtE website and how the EtE conversation worked.  To respond to any questions.	Time point 1 Organisation information questions.
Time point 2	To review the EtE conversation.  To record any change actions resulting from the discussion.  To agree a timetable for the organisation's activities and a completion date when the researcher will return for the final focus groups.	Time Point 2 Focus group questions.
Time point 3 Key contacts focus group	To reflect on what has happened (evaluatively) for individuals and the organisation/group following the EtE conversation and any resulting actions.	Time point 3 Focus group questions (a).
Time point 3 Focus group discussion with EtE conversation participants	To review the experiences of using EtE from the perspective of a wider group of participants involved: what difference did EtE make and how well did it work?	Time point 3 Focus group questions (b).

#### 4b.2.3 Data analysis and reporting strategy

A key decision within qualitative research involves planning how to deal with the data, both in terms of how to organise it, and how to present the findings in a way which retains the coherence of the 'story', and addresses the study purpose, objectives and questions. Reissman (2008) provides a useful summary of these choices and decisions. She suggests three analysis choices: thematic, structural and dialogic. Each focusing on a different research question: a thematic approach concerned with content or what is being communicated, a structural approach concerned with how a narrative is structured by the narrator to get their message

across, and a dialogic approach concerned with the relational connections and context between the speaker and the listener. In this study I was expecting to generate significant amounts of data from the semi-structured focus groups over the three time points. Digital recordings were transcribed to provide a set of scripts for each of the case study organisations related to the three time points. Analysis of the scripts firstly reflected the 'story' that the focus group participants wanted to communicate. This analysis process also helped to highlight dialogue where the participants had additional comments to make that lay outside of the focus group questions. A second analysis related these stories thematically to the specific study objectives. This two-stage analysis was reflected in the findings by showing the organisation and individual case studies first followed by identifying key feedback and learning from the case studies in relation to the study objectives. This approach to the data analysis ensured that firstly the findings were participant/case study led, and secondly used to inform the study objectives.

An analysis challenge was to retain the coherence of the narrative or 'story' of the two organisations. Using a case study approach provided the rationale for creating the stories, but there was also a need for a structure or pathway within each of the case studies particularly so that the sequence of time over the three key time points was captured. Salmon and Riessman (2013) affirm the need for creating coherence within the narrative through the use of 'meaningful patterns'. A helpful guide was found within the structural analysis approaches where temporal sequences are used to analyse text. Labov and Waletzky (1967) first used the notion of sequencing narrative in terms of temporal events. They divided text into a sequence of distinct events: abstract (how does it begin?); complicating action (the issue); resolution (how it ended up), evaluation (the result) and coda (what does it mean relating back to the starting point). In this study I have used this temporal structure as a tool for constructing the case studies or to aid the practice of storytelling. Table 28 shows the case study structure used in this study in relation to Labov and Waletzky's (1967) temporal sequences.

**Table 28 Study 4b Case study structure in relation to Labov and Waletzky's temporal sequences**

<b>Temporal sequences (Labov and Waletzky, 1967)</b>	<b>Case study structure</b>
Abstract – how does it begin?  Orientation – who/what does it involve and when/where?	In the beginning ... setting the scene.  The organisation context for evaluation and for their involvement with EtE.
Complicating action – the issue or then what happened?	Along the way ...  What happened when they used EtE?  What was the focus, issues, challenges, actions.
Resolution – what happened in the end?	In the end ...  What's happened (evaluation-wise) since completing the EtE conversation?  What difference did EtE make?
Evaluation – the point or result, so what?  Coda – back to the present, what does it mean?	And the moral of the story is ...  What is learned in relation to study objectives?

Finally, it became clear that within one of the organisation teams, one of the participants related what had happened within the group at an individual and personal level. Initially, the case study analysis described above aimed to capture what happened when organisations used the EtE Toolkit, and by focusing on the key research objectives and questions. However, I felt that the individual experience that was expressed was important and should be documented in some way. Here the approaches that Riessman (2008) calls dialogic/performance analysis provided tools for gaining greater insight into individual narratives. Doucet and Mauthner (2008) developed a process of narrative analysis – The Listener's Guide. This is based on four separate readings.

- Reading for the overall plot and reader response – this sets the context and highlights the importance of researcher reflexivity to check for reactions to the characters and the story.

- Reading for the voice of 'I' – this isolates the active voice of the key character and leads to the formation of 'I' poems.
- Reading for relationships – this sets the character in relation to others in the scenario.
- Reading for social, cultural and political contexts – this sets the character within the bigger context within which they are operating.

The Listener's Guide was used to analyse data from the second and third focus group transcripts and focusses on the experience of one individual. The analysis is included as an individual case study (Case 4, p. 204).

#### 4b.2.4 Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 29 Acknowledgement of ethics approval). The design and conduct of study have benefited from academic scrutiny covering all recognised requirements including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, protection of research participants, assessment of risks and benefits, obtaining informed consent and finally, doing no harm.

Ethical issues or areas that were of particular interest in this study included:

- Informed consent – this was needed from the organisations and individuals in terms of making sure that they had sufficient information and were clear about the commitment and demands of time and personnel involved over an extended research period of 6-8 months. Additionally, it was important to check if there were additional permissions needed for example from any organisational ethics committees. This turned out not to be the case. The focus group discussions were digitally recorded and permission was also sought from individuals that this was acceptable. Consent was revisited as the study progressed to re-check participant consent, for example that they were happy with how they and their organisation were being represented in the case studies.

- Data security – All digital recordings and notes collected during the project were kept on a password protected computer until after the research project was completed and any requirements for submitting the final study were met. The audio files will be destroyed after the research thesis has been examined. This is expected to be approximately twelve months to allow for subsequent papers.
- Confidentiality of participants – whilst each of the organisations is identified in terms of the sector they are operating in; care has been taken to remove specific identifying indicators such as location. Care has also been taken to protect the identities of individuals such as changing specific job titles. As a final check, the draft case studies including the 'I' poems, were sent to the respective participants to check that they felt they had been fairly represented, and that the individuals involved felt that their identities were protected.

### 4b.3 Findings 1 – Organisation case studies

Study 4b involved two distinct organisations: Organisation 1 – Health and Organisation 2 – Further Education. In this section the contexts for each of these organisations, their current evaluation practice and their motivation for involvement in the field testing of the EtE Toolkit are presented. This is followed by the findings from the focus groups which are presented as case studies. Each case study maps out the pathway from the initial EtE conversation, to identifying future actions, to exploring how points triggered through the conversation were followed up. There are four case studies. Case 1 reflects the experiences of the health organisation. Within the further education organisation (Organisation 2) three distinct case studies reflect the experiences of the Equality and Inclusion Team (Case 2), the Student Advice Team (Case 3) and the Acting Team Manager (Case 4). The participants in each case are coded at the start of each section, and are identified by organisational role and role within the EtE conversation. Different participants were involved at different time points within the research process which reflected their different levels of involvement, this is highlighted at the start of each case. The last section (4b.3.6) draws together the organisation findings.

#### 4b.3.1 Organisation Contexts

##### **Organisation 1 – Health**

The health organisation was set up initially to inform the development of hospital services. The aim was to provide the health services with a means of ensuring that the perspective of patients and the public was at the heart of improving patient care and experience. The organisation is independent, but works closely with the health services. The organisation's work focuses on 3 quality areas: patient safety, patient experience and person-centred care. Representatives were involved in a number of groups and task groups set up to ensure information and services are patient-friendly. They were also involved in designing and administering Patient Experience surveys. The organisation recently completed an evaluation of its

activities which the study participants had found very helpful. As a result of this they wanted to become more systematic in collecting and tracking information.

*We want to find out how effective we are at influencing services. We can ask questions that the staff can't ask. We would like (our work) to be more recognised and valued.* (Focus group participant)

Getting involved with the EtE study came at a key point of change for the organisation. They had a new development plan and wanted to explore how and how well they can influence service improvement. Following discussion about the EtE process, the organisation decided to organise their EtE conversation initially with a small representative group (5) plus the Chair Person who was also the EtE conversation facilitator, and the paid support worker who was also the note taker. These were experienced facilitators and no specific challenges were envisaged, although there was a potential conflict of roles for the chair of the group also acting as the conversation facilitator.

## **Organisation 2 – Further education**

The further education organisation in this study was formed following a merger. It supports approximately 30,000 full and part-time students offering a wide range of qualifications, study courses and leisure classes. The focus for the EtE field testing was to pilot the EtE Toolkit with two of the support service teams: Equality and Inclusion and Student Advice. The further education colleges in Scotland use a framework of self-evaluation as part of the process of Government review and inspection. A recent shift has given more freedom to individual colleges to decide the methods and approaches to use to complete the self-evaluation requirement.

*We have preferred to adapt our own approach (to self-evaluation) to try to bring the merged teams together. We are trying to find a new way – a fourth way, which is a whole college approach. One year after the merger, we want to focus on hearts and minds.* (Focus group participant)

Self-evaluation is defined by the organisation as the method used to analyse and reflect on service delivery and to identify areas for service improvement. Teams self-evaluate annually and create actions and targets and assign responsibilities so that everyone plays a part and contributes to quality improvement and



enhancement. The EtE pilot came at a good time for the organisation, one year after the merger and where there was felt to be a need to consolidate teams' self-evaluation activities. Also, with a Government review coming up, they wanted to be able to highlight staff engagement in the self-evaluation process. The EtE field testing provided an opportunity for integrating people from the merged teams to work together. Following discussion about the EtE process it was agreed that they would start with two staff teams: Equality and Inclusion and Student Advice. These were both 'student facing' departments and were seen as more 'evaluation ready'. They anticipated using the EtE process with other teams in the future. Planning also involved discussion about how best to facilitate the EtE conversation with these potentially large teams (approx. 20), although the final numbers of participants was less. It was decided that each group would be supported by a facilitator from the internal Quality Team and would involve the Team Manager and a designated note taker. The Quality Team Manager supported the overall piloting of the EtE Toolkit.

### 4b.3.2 Case 1 Health Organisation

#### Participants

Table 29 shows Case 1 participant codes and their involvement in different time points of the research process.

**Table 29 Study 4b Case 1 participant codes and involvement at different time points in research process**

Participant code and role in research process	Time point 1	Time point 2	Time point 3
C1-P1 –Chair of group – EtE conversation facilitator/ EtE contact	x	x	x
C1-P2 – Manager – EtE conversation note taker/ EtE contact	x	x	x
C1-P3 – Sub-group chair – EtE conversation participant			x
C1-P4 – Sub-group chair – EtE conversation participant			x

#### About the EtE conversation

Case 1's EtE conversation involved 7 people – 5 sub-group chairs plus 2 others. Note that not all of the EtE conversation participants took part in the focus groups. The conversation was facilitated by the chair of the group (C1-P1) and the manager (C1-P2) provided general guidance and took the notes. They had allowed 2 hours, but finished slightly over this time and did not fully explore the action planning Stage 3. The group arranged a further meeting to consolidate their action plan.

The focus group participants reported that it took a little while for the conversation to settle and for participants to become clearer about how the EtE process worked and how it was relevant to them. The EtE conversation group participants also found some of the language a bit difficult to relate to for example what was meant by stakeholders and what did externality mean? However, once

they did get into the EtE conversation process they found the scoring, discussing and assessing strengths and weaknesses to be very helpful.

*C1-P1: I used the cards. They didn't find the cards that helpful. They wanted a copy of the sheets with the wording on it so that people could look at it and think. As we went on, it did start to become clearer what we were trying to do ... people were saying at the end, that if we have another one (EtE conversation) like this, it probably wouldn't take as long because now we've looked at it all, it would be quicker the next time. But it was a very worthwhile two hours. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: I think at first when people looked at the questions, you thought is this really to do with us, what has this got to do with volunteers? It's more geared to business, but (C1-P2) made us aware that this was part of our volunteer's role as well. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P2: I remember there was quite a lot of discussion around externality, what did that actually mean. You know what I might find externality is, somebody else might think would be different. So it's how people take that meaning of something. But I remember there was a lot of discussion around that, what does that actually mean for us. (Time point 2)*

The participants felt that their EtE conversation had provided an opportunity for focused, structured and critical in-depth discussion. They reported it to be challenging in a 'good way' by raising critical issues, and also led to C1-P2 to reflect on their role – are they providing the right support? and especially are they providing feedback on the impact that the group is having?

*C1-P2: I think it helped to bring about maybe conversations that aren't always had or even thought about, with people being in a safe environment to air their views, to air what they were thinking, and they were really quite an honest group of people. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: It was the first time I think we'd all sat round a table and focused on what we were talking about. ...this did keep us focused all the time ... there was an awful lot of discussion and an awful lot came out of that. (Time point 2)*

They felt that through the discussion, there was an increased awareness about what the group were doing which they found encouraging, but also disappointing that the group were not sharing, communicating, giving feedback within the group, internally within the wider health services, and externally with the public.

*C1-P2: It raised a lot of questions about how the group are moving forward. About what the future is, what the impact is and how they can actually continue to have that impact and get feedback from what the impact is, because that's one of the things that was discussed is that we can't always actually see what difference we're making. We don't always get that feedback. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: ... from our members as well because they don't always come back from a meeting and say what went on or how they contributed or whether there was anything that we were being effective at in these meetings. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: The surprise was that people had forgotten what they'd done and then this brings it back out that it's not being recorded. I'm passionate about the group, but we don't seem to have been terribly good at capturing what we have done, getting it down on paper and letting people outside know about it as well, the communications side with the public that we're supposed to be representing don't even know we're there. I think that's a bit that also we're needing to look at is the external communications as much as the internal with the feedback. (Time point 2)*

The participants reported that at the end of the EtE conversation everyone said that they felt the discussion had had a structure to it and that it had helped them to focus. They felt they had covered a number of relevant themes and that all those present had spoken openly about their views on the strengths and weaknesses and what they saw as needing action. The questions had helped to get people thinking more clearly about evaluation in general and about the specific topics raised under each of the EtE themes.

*C1-P1: I personally think it was a more structured meeting. I think they all said that at the end, actually, that it was the most structured meeting they'd been at ... a lot more came out in that discussion than anything we've ever had before. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P2: I came in a wee bit late and there was a real buzz about the room. Sometimes trying to get everybody's voices heard would be quite tricky for the facilitator. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: It's not always like that. Some people can be a bit quieter than others but I wouldn't say that there was anyone that was quiet. Everybody got across their point of view. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P1: They did really speak their minds and that was good. It's started a thought process that wasn't there before. (Time point 2)*

It seems that for this organisation, participating in the EtE conversation triggered a purposeful discussion that had allowed the group to realise issues that until then had been hidden within the day to day operations. Also, despite any confusions about the process and language, the group seems to have worked out a way to use the tool. This is consistent with the idea that the EtE conversation can be used independently by groups, but does highlight some technical issues like how to get started that may benefit from revisions. This approach used for the field testing is also limited to feedback as reported from the focus group participants as reflection on their experience of events. This is likely influenced by their perception of what happened, their role within the conversation and within the group, and also the passage of time since the conversation took place. These limitations are discussed in later sections.

### **Planning future actions as a result of the EtE conversation**

'Learning' was reported by the focus group participants as the EtE theme that the group settled on. Other EtE themes were discussed such as dissemination, but the group decided to focus on the issue of feedback at all levels.

*C1-P1: The one that we ended focusing on was 'how does your organisation learn from evaluation ... how do we get the feedback, how do we learn from the feedback, how will that help us to give us more power?' Feedback is one way of giving you that power and it's not just feedback from that meeting but it's feedback about what's going on within the health service too. That's why we did feel that that was our major one. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P2: I think learning right across the board, learning about what difference the Group makes, but it's also what learning we can give the members to have that confidence to be able to have a voice, because I think sometimes there is a fear that 'I'm not medically trained'. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants reported that through the EtE conversation the group had identified some actions for prioritising how to improve learning from evaluation such as how to encourage feedback from members and staff to empower the group to respond effectively on behalf of patients. The main idea proposed by the group was for members to keep a diary of their involvement which could record for example what members have been involved with and the number of hours contributed. They reported that this idea was built upon through discussion by the group. The group also acknowledged that this type of record would be a form of validation and recognition of volunteers for example the number of hours contributed, and could be used for their quality assurance processes like Investing in Volunteers standard and supporting the Participation Standards that all health boards have to complete.

*C1-P1: One of the members said if you could just put a space where we can comment on the meetings that we were at, what we felt, how we'd contributed or anything like that. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P2: We've also to remember that it's (feedback) a two-way process. We need to get feedback from the members that are participating in the groups to hear what their points of view are, but it's also a chance to get the feedback from the chairs of these groups. (Time point 2)*

*C1-P2: Maybe one of the areas that it can be trialed is the Steering Group because they're the ones that have been doing the work on it, so they can actually trial it, and then we're taking back that evidence to the wider group, because they've tried it and this is what we've found. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants also reported that they were hoping to continue with the EtE process by widening it to include more people, to use this new process to start the new year off, and to link it to their existing plans.

### **Follow-up – what’s happened (evaluation-wise) since completing the EtE conversation?**

This next section is based on the data collected during a meeting with the organisation participants approximately five months after the EtE conversation took place (Time point 3). The purpose of this meeting was to reflect on what had happened (evaluatively) for individuals and the organisation following the EtE conversation and any resulting actions. The original focus identified by the participants during the EtE conversation was on learning about the impact and influence that their group was having. They were keen to develop a process for gathering feedback from their members representing the group at key meetings and from other stakeholders. The focus group participants reported that following the EtE conversation the group had initiated a diary mechanism for getting feedback and sharing information about the actions and impact from meetings that members attended on the group’s behalf. They also reported on discussion about developing a website for promoting the group and sharing information more widely.

*C1-P1: The priority we picked out of the tool was learning – how does your organisation learn from evaluation and what the steering group thought might be a good idea was that we pilot an evaluation diary that would show what the steering group members were doing. They decided to pilot the evaluation diary for several months and then we would have an evaluation group look at these diaries and see how we are progressing in various ways. There were several ways that it might give us answers to what we are doing, are we influencing, are we contributing, other gaps and what we should be doing, that type of thing. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P1: Without that feedback we’re not going to know how effective it would be or what influence we’re having. You see there’s the impact for us, but more importantly there’s the impact in how it improves things for the patients. (Time point 3)*

They reported that their progress had been very slow, but that the group had realised that they did not meet frequently enough to progress these actions effectively. They reflected that the issue of time and frequency of meetings

emerged as a wider issue and challenge for the group advancing business in general. The following quotes suggest that they had become more aware of their limitations including, time – especially volunteer time, frequency of meetings and the need for high level strategic support for their role and function.

*C1-P1: One of the problems is that we don't meet that regularly. It's usually three monthly meetings so things don't move with a speed in that respect. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P3: I was a bit concerned about it because I don't think, when you started on this, that we actually met often enough to actually deal with this. That was my main concern. We were usually meeting three monthly so it was going to take ages before we could actually sort of implement the parts. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P3: We are now looking to encourage more meetings, more regular rather than having them every three months, especially for the Steering Group, for next year we have the schedule of meetings with a greater frequency. (Time point 3)*

The focus group participants also reported that there was a sense that whilst the pilot had been conducted within a smaller group, there was a need to widen the EtE process and agreed actions to the larger Steering Group to create more ownership over what had been proposed and for agreeing a way forward for using the EtE Toolkit. However, there did seem to be some tensions between the smaller pilot group and the wider Steering Group. For example, one of the focus group participants challenged the EtE process as being too complex suggesting 'reflective practice' was a standard practice used within the NHS and sufficient for their needs – 'why adopt an additional process?' A further challenge related to the role and direction of the group, and in particular about the need for more strategic lead and support from the top of the health services.

*C1-P3: I feel in all of these headings we need to have staff on board as well and at this stage, apart from our wonderful support from (specific staff) you know at the very top I'm not sure if we have the support we need. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P2: ... understand entirely the importance of having buy in at senior level. (Time point 3)*



*C1-P3: I mean it was ... I just felt that they should be involved from the outset in the vision that we're trying to set out, because we can decide all kinds of things but we don't have the clout to follow them through. We do need the support of not just the frontline staff but some of the strategic level staff. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P2: I think there were some members who felt once the hospital opened our job was done. We had to find new directions or to develop some of the previous features which had gone on a back burner. I think it (the conversation) aired it (this point) within the room and I felt at the time that it did bring up things that we were maybe skirting around. (Time point 3)*

This discussion suggests that from their involvement in the EtE conversation, other issues have come to the foreground such as their meeting structure, and their rationale and purpose. Also more strategic aspects of their work such as the need for high level support if their role was to be effective and influential in the way that they hoped it would be. This is interesting in that where the starting point for the EtE conversation was a focus on evaluation practice, links to other aspects of their work have emerged. These connections suggest the integrated nature of evaluation within organisational processes, as opposed to a limited reporting type role, and is perhaps a further case for the evaluation-minded organisation.

The focus group participants reported that being involved with the EtE conversation had increased their awareness of evaluation and its importance to their work. Their involvement also seems to have raised questions of the group and got them thinking.

*C1-P2: I think what has happened is we've raised the awareness bringing evaluation to the forefront so I think if anything one of the great achievements is the fact that it is something that you are talking about fairly regularly. What difference are we making, what benefit is this actually having to me as an individual because it's not just about us as an organisation, the members need to get a benefit from this. So I think that has been one of the really good things. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P3: I'm certainly aware in some of the areas in which I'm involved of my responsibility to share more, you know, for example, the outpatient's stakeholder meetings looking at how to reorganise outpatient appointments to maximise efficiency yet not compromise the quality of the patients. After that I started coming to the outreach meeting, I'm aware when I go to something I'm not just going in isolation. I have a responsibility to sort of cascade it for everyone. (Time point 3)*

*C1-P1: See this is my vision that everybody thinks like that in the end, that they are going to meetings not just to sit there but that they put something down by making points from the angle of patient interest. Those that have submitted (diaries) are putting down very good comments and I'm finding it useful to think that if the whole Steering Group got that, they would all find it of value to them once it gets going but it's the time. (Time point 3)*

Finally, in a further communication to see how they were getting on, the group Chairperson reported the following.

*C1-P1: It was interesting to reflect on the discussions that had taken place. You might be interested to know that the diary of engagement that was introduced is ongoing and completed by several of the members each month. Information from this is proving to be useful and informative. (Time point 3)*

A summary of the overall findings from Organisation 1 are reported in section 4b.3.6, p. 210.

### 4b.3.3 Case 2 Equality and Inclusion Team

#### Participants

Table 30 shows Case 2 participant codes and their involvement in different time points of the research process.

**Table 30 Study 4b Case 2 participant codes and involvement at different time points in research process**

Participant code and role in research process	Time point 1	Time point 2	Time point 3
C2-P1 – Quality Team Manager – EtE contact and conversation facilitator	x	x	x
C2-P2 – Quality Team Member – EtE conversation facilitator Equality and Inclusion	x	x	x
C2-P3 – Team Manager Equality and Inclusion Team – EtE conversation participant		x	x
C2-P4 – Team member Equality and Inclusion Team – EtE conversation participant			x

#### About the EtE conversation

The Equality and Inclusion Team's EtE conversation involved 12 people including the Team Manager (C2-P3), and two facilitators (C2-P1 and C2-P2). Note that not all of the EtE conversation participants took part in the focus groups. The conversation lasted between 2-3 hours and they did complete the whole process. Only part of the team was involved as the manager was still appointing new members to make up the full complement. Two of the staff present were new arrivals having transferred from other college departments. For this team there seems to have been a shared awareness of the role of equalities and inclusion but different experiences of evaluation.

*C2-P1: ... it was a new team with people from three different campuses coming together, so it was useful in the same way that Student Advice found it, just meeting each other. ... coming from equalities, I think everyone had the same mind set about what equality should be, and what inclusion should be and being*

*there for the student. Everyone had that mind set, but they had different experiences of evaluation. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants reported that the team were able to focus on evaluation through the discussion. This was an opportunity to bring the new team together for shared discussion. It was useful for introducing new staff to the topic of evaluation, and for integrating other staff with different experiences. There were more similarities for these teams coming together post-merger than for the Student Advice Team (Case 3). Feedback from the conversation was that the discussion had got them all thinking.

*C2-P1: Some members of staff who were brand new to the team were saying this is great, this is an introduction for us. We haven't done this before. There was somebody that had done it in another organisation and was quite familiar but from the experience she'd had in a different organisation, she was quite useful to actually input and show that she understood what evaluation was. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P1: Staff fed back that they enjoyed it and it was a very focused way to do it, especially for the new people. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P2: It made them think about things like who do we work with, what kind of feedback could we get from them and do stakeholders have an impact on their service and what have we changed as a result of working with those stakeholders. (Time point 2)*

Also importantly, the focus group participants reported how the EtE conversation had been enjoyable, because of the way everyone had participated in a critical conversation about what worked and what did not work, and areas for improvement evaluation wise. They reported how valuable it was to appreciate and recognise success as well as discussing the challenges and problems.

*C2-P3: We really enjoyed it. We all went down the stairs as a team and went, 'That was really good.' Because it just, it just opened up everybody all talking and better communication and really looking at what we did and, well, can we improve there, or. We actually do that really well, we've never really, kind of, praised ourselves really. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P3: I think it was also the reassurance. It was reassurance we're doing the right things and doing it in the right way. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P2: Yes, they found areas for improvement but sometimes, especially if you've been doing it for a long time you think, well this is a self-evaluation thing, we've got to find out what we're not doing, but it's as much about reassuring yourself that you are doing the right things, or that you're doing them the right way, or finding better ways to do them. (Time point 2)*

### **Planning future actions as a result of the EtE conversation**

The focus group participants reported that for this group there was consensus and agreement over the scoring of the questions as the team was more coherent and clearer about its role. Conversation participants were quickly able to relate the themes and questions to their work context.

*C2-P1: They were talking about letting people know and dissemination about what it was they did, because they knew what they did and they had results and PIs, but they weren't necessarily disseminating them as well as they would have liked to. From an externality point of view, there were other people that they could have got more feedback from and they weren't making best use. They talked to this person and talked to that person, but they didn't ask them to comment on their self-evaluation and they started to think, oh, somebody like the Education Challenge Unit could comment on our self-evaluation and that would give us more of a 360 degree feel about what we're doing. (Time point 2)*

Themes that they focused on were externality, feedback and dissemination. The main areas for actions discussed were:

- Shifting the focus in team meetings, emphasis on success and not just problems.
- Preparing some example student case studies
- Dissemination – sharing, feeding back more widely across college.

The discussion also highlighted an issue for the college where they send out large surveys to help staff with their self-evaluation within support services but do not link it or include the teaching faculties. Bridging this gap was seen as a challenge but also as a priority.

*C2-P1: We talked about, how they disseminate, where they would celebrate students' success, how they would involve externals in their self-evaluation process, they talked about development as a team and how they were going to actually find time or space to get together as a team for discussion because they're diverse across three campuses. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P2: ... they thought throughout the year they would work up case studies of individual students that they worked with to show the work that's going on in the unit, and to celebrate the success and publicise that more, which I don't think they do at the moment. (Time point 2)*

*C2-P1: I'd say that was one of the main things that they got out of this was that the number of students that they deal with, how the students' success... I mean, for example, at the moment we're putting out performance indicators and we've broken them all down by equalities, but it's not just the lecturing staff that help that student succeed. There's a lot of support goes in from Equality and Inclusion, so we felt by identifying and doing a wee case study, it would not only celebrate success but it would inform the faculties of the sorts of services that were available... (Time point 2)*

*C2-P2: And encourage other students as well to register. I think a big thing for them was getting feedback from their stakeholders was what came out. They work with loads of stakeholders but maybe very rarely get constructive feedback from them. (Time point 2)*

It seems that the Equality and Inclusion Team were able to relate the EtE themes and questions to their work context, and were able to identify development areas that would contribute to a more shared team approach to self-evaluation. There seemed to be a particular focus on seeking broader/ external feedback, and on sharing and dissemination. Their EtE conversations also seems to have highlighted a challenge in the communication and linkages between support services and the teaching faculty staff.

### **Follow-up – what’s happened (evaluation-wise) since completing the EtE conversation?**

The Equality and Inclusion team responded positively to the EtE conversation, largely because the three campuses coming together were coherent about the equality and inclusion role and function, although they did have new staff to bring into the team and there were different experiences of evaluation amongst team members. This team were in a position to develop actions from the EtE conversation. However, this group have also experienced challenges that have limited their progress. The focus group participants identified the main challenge being gaps and changes in staffing.

A key focus for development was establishing better communications across the campuses through for example cross campus staff meetings. These were seen as a key forum for self-evaluation by the team. Another area that was identified as a priority was a communications gap between the Equality and Inclusion team and the teaching and faculty staff. The priority here was to establish better awareness and appreciation of the role played by Equalities and Inclusion in supporting students. Focus group participants reported that for some students the intervention and support provided through Equality and Inclusion was crucial to a student’s participation and success in their chosen course of study. They reported that a series of meetings had now been set up with the different teaching faculties to take this forward.

*C2-P1: The difference in this team was this team was already experienced and the coordinators who came in to join the Team Manager were supportive. And so change moved faster, and probably with less resistance than in the Student Advice Team (Case 3). (Time point 3)*

*C2-P3: Evaluatively (for Equality and Inclusion Team) we’ve established three cross campus staff meetings. This is a new thing. We also have coordinators’ meetings where we discuss any concerns that are a result of each campuses weekly staff meetings, which is pretty much where most of our evaluation gets done. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P4: Personally, from the administrator’s point of view, I would say that there’s better communication within the three campuses now. The two coordinators were*

*kind of late in their posts so that things were a wee bit, kind of, sketchy for the first couple of months of the new term. But now that the posts have been filled I think that everybody's a wee bit more, 'Right, let's roll this out now.' There's definitely better communication I would say. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P3: What we have managed to set up, we were hoping to be further advanced than this at the moment, but we're meeting with each of the different faculty and curriculum heads and senior lecturers. First one is next week with general education. We're hoping to go through all the faculties because there has been pretty poor communication between us and teaching staff in particular. Most of our support units know exactly what service we provide but the teaching staff, in some departments, is sketchy what our actual role is, what we do. (Time point 3)*

During the follow-up focus group the Equality and Inclusion team also described a shift in attitude towards evaluation following the EtE conversation. They reported increased participation and contribution in their self-evaluation process. This they attributed to a realisation that everyone has something of value to contribute, as opposed to a small team of more senior staff completing the evaluation process on others behalf.

*C2-P3: The notable difference I noticed from our previous self-evaluations was contribution from everybody. In the past, usually the same four or five people, used to sit down and go through the evaluation process stage by stage by stage. Mind numbing and mechanical I thought, but obviously we all realised the importance of it. But now we get contributions from everybody in our team. Every person had something to say which was an eye opener for me because some of the contributions were really good as well. (Time point 3)*

The focus group participants also acknowledged that the EtE conversation had been enjoyable, interesting and engaging. They felt that as a result of the EtE conversation staff meetings had generally become more open and discursive.

*C2-P4: It was one of those things where even after the event we were going, 'Do you know, that was really good, that was really interesting'. It definitely gave everybody opportunity. It gave you food for thought. I never really thought of it like that, you know, it was probably one of the best evaluations. You know, as to say, I actually did enjoy it. (Time point 3)*



*C2-P3: So did I. It made me realise personally, that to be constantly evaluating, that's what our team meetings are, they're a constant evaluation process as are the coordinators and as are the cross campus meetings. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P4: I think with the cards and questions it definitely opened it up more and promoted, just what you're saying, other people, individuals to contribute more than they probably would of in the past. So, I enjoyed it. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P3: The most rewarding thing for me was I felt, all the staff I've spoken to felt empowered about it. They had contributed and that contribution was taken on board. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P3: It was good to see the differences of opinion as well. I think our actual team meetings have become more lively as a result of that, because although everybody is encouraged to have a say, I feel that team meetings are more open now and there's more discussion in them than was previous to it. (Time point 3)*

*C2-P4: I would say that since the evaluation, people feel more confident in giving their opinion and their views and what they think. (Time point 3)*

The Equality and Inclusion team seem to have gained from their EtE conversation in ways that go beyond a critical review of their evaluation practice. In particular, as reported by the focus group participants, they seem to have benefited from creating the conditions for open, critical and democratic discussion and realised how energising this engagement was for individuals and the team. This suggests an extra team building value from participating in the EtE conversation.

A summary of the overall findings from Organisation 2 are reported in section 4b.3.6, p. 212.

#### 4b.3.4 Case 3 Student Advice Team

##### Participants

Table 31 shows Case 3 participant codes and their involvement in different time points of the research process.

**Table 31 Study 4b Case 3 participant codes and involvement at different time points in research process**

Participant code and role in research process	Time point 1	Time point 2	Time point 3
C3.1-P1 – Quality Team Manager – EtE contact and conversation facilitator	x	x	x
C3-P2 – Acting Team Manager Student Advice Team – EtE conversation participant	x	x	x
C3-P3 – Team Member Student Advice Team – EtE conversation participant			x
C3-P4 –Team Member Quality Team – EtE conversation facilitator	x	x	x

##### About the EtE conversation

The Student Advice Team's EtE conversation involved 12 people including the new Acting Team Manager (C3-P2) and the conversation facilitator (C3-P1). A member of the team was designated as note taker (C3-P3). Note that not all of the EtE conversation participants took part in the focus groups. This was a new staff team coming together for the first time. The conversation lasted between 2-3 hours. They did not complete the whole process, but the self-assessment conversation proved to be very valuable. In addition, through using the EtE Toolkit it became clear from the focus group discussions that the experience had also made an impact on individuals, and in particular the newly appointed Acting Team Manager (C3.1-P2). In this case a further section is included which relates the individual narrative of the Acting Team Manager (Case 4, 4b.3.5, p. 204).

The focus group participants reported that the group seemed to need to clarify the role and aims of their team function first before they could consider the role of evaluation. The discussion proved to be very informative for the Acting Team Manager alerting them that they needed to get the basics right first, and especially not to make assumptions about staff awareness of evaluation as not everyone was at the same level of understanding.

*C3-P2: It was a great opportunity for me to find out what people's knowledge really was of evaluation, ... people's involvement previously had been very different across the three campuses and it let me see where people were ... it became very clear that some people didn't really still realise what their role was, what their purpose was. They therefore didn't feel they could actually (take) part in evaluation, they weren't able to evaluate but also didn't understand what evaluation was, ... I mean, I found it excellent because at that stage of me taking on that role, it gave me great insight into the three teams, and it made me realise not everyone's of the same mindset. Not everyone's actually even aware of our aims, our purpose, our role. ... I've done other things to try and get that going, a kind of overview of the service, the expectations of the service, annual plan of work and things, and that's steadily getting people starting to understand. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants reported that at the start of the EtE conversation people were not sure what evaluation was. They were defensive and a bit fearful that they were being tested. Through the discussion people started to feel 'ok', they felt they could be honest, and as they started to respond to the questions they realised that they did have something to contribute. They started to make connections to what they were doing. It was challenging at the start to get people to see it not as a personal test, and to keep the focus of the discussion on the new team (post-merger). For example, participants would refer back to previous ways of doing things which no longer operated. However, the conversation did get them all thinking about evaluation, and especially as some had not been involved in the past.

*C3-P1: ... people not being sure of what it was we were doing and why we were doing it, and when we put the first couple of challenge questions out, I was having*

*to kick it off by saying, well, this could mean, or what about...but once we got maybe four or five into it, they started contributing themselves and they could see cross-references or things where we seemed to be saying the same thing again. We asked everybody to put on a post it what they thought evaluation was. A couple of members of staff went ... I don't know, and that was fine. (Time point 2)*

*C3-P2: At one point right near the beginning, I felt there was a slight defensiveness and a fear, really, and I sort of said, well, if that's how you feel, that's all right to say. At first I thought, oh, I don't know if they're going to say anything, then at the end of it people were like we've done, oh, but I've done, you know? And for me, that was great because I realised people did know the stuff, they do have these connections, they just haven't thought about it in this sense, and because of what's being going on with the merger, there's just a bit of uncertainty. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants emphasised that for the Student Advice team the issue and experience of the merger and the 'new' team meant that the conversation participants would refer back to 'how things were'. This became a sort of default for individuals where they made some positive progress only to hesitate and step back a little. In this situation, the EtE conversation seems to have provided a safe place or outlet where the participants could express and explore their concerns.

*C3-P2: ... people were really, really into it and then all of a sudden it would just go down a wee tangent again of 'but we wouldn't have done that before'. We think everything we've done before won't be getting done which actually now isn't the case, but that's how it felt at the time, but it was great because it allowed people to view that, to voice that as well, and it allowed me to like, I hear this, so that I can then try and do something about that, and then we can begin hopefully good self-evaluation. (Time point 2)*

This point about the 'new' team was also highlighted by one of the focus group participants who endorsed the value of the conversation as the first meeting opportunity for the newly merged team. They described how the meeting had started off with people feeling very negative and uncertain about their understanding of evaluation, but also about the merger and the new team.

Through the questions and discussion, the participants were able to share their knowledge and understanding. They grew in confidence and were able to start to plan actions to improve the situation.

*C3-P3: It was good in a way, because we're a new team and there were new people like myself, we had people who were experienced, and people who I didn't know.*

*Evaluation kind of caused blank faces, because nobody really thinks about it, they do it, but they don't actually put a name to it.*

*It started off very negative, because, bear in mind, we were all not at a happy place because there were so many different things happening to different people. You didn't feel as if you were valued, I think that was the word, nobody was valued. Now, I'm not saying it's brilliant, but we're getting there and you can see progress, and you can feel the progress as well.*

*What we wanted and what we discussed, well it sounds like team planning, team meetings, more communication. But the evaluation; we talked about what we could try. We went through each theme and then we had a green, red and amber level, and I think our levels were quite low, only because we'd only come together and we all had different practices. But there is an action plan now, which we didn't have, and that's something that came out in the meeting. (Time point 2)*

Although for this group there were clearly other organisational change factors that were influencing their participation in the EtE conversation, their experience does highlight aspects of the process that need to be considered. For example, how the conversation is started so that participants can check their shared understanding about evaluation, that assumptions about levels of understanding of evaluation are not made, and that the starting point for participants can be established. Other aspects about the EtE process that the focus group participants reported included the perceived overlap in the questions. This potential duplication was not seen as a problem on two counts, firstly it was felt that if a question about stakeholder involvement was not dealt with under one theme then it could be addressed in another. The repeating of topics was seen as a cross-checking mechanism. In addition, the Student Advice Team identified how the

recurring of a question or topic helped to build confidence and reassurance that they were 'on the right track'.

*C3-P1: The only thing that I would note is that we kept coming back to two or three major things, so sometimes when we asked the question, we'd covered something and later when we asked the question and we thought, well, we already covered that. (Time point 2)*

*C3 –P4: I think externality; you maybe came across that. Quite often you'd have covered some of that under involvement and purposes, when it's talking about stakeholders, you felt as though you'd already talked about that. (Time point 2)*

*C3-P1: But it's useful to have both because if it didn't come up, you've still got that question to come back to and then if it had come up, you can just say, oh right, we've already covered that so we'll move on. (Time point 2)*

*C3-P2: I also think sometimes when we've already covered a topic, I think people get a wee bit confident with that, there was quite a positive about that in some ways, not a negative. I think it was just more like, we do know what we're doing. (Time point 2)*

One aspect about the EtE process that worked for the group was the use of questions. The focus group participants referred to them as 'challenge questions' and found that they provided structure and focus for the discussions. This structure was also seen as helpful for guiding facilitation.

*C3 –P1: I think it helped to keep the focus, when you've got very different questions and you have to rate yourself, it keeps that focus there. It makes it easier to facilitate, certainly. (Time point 2)*

The need for and role of facilitation to guide the process and the discussion was also seen as important. This was especially at the start of the discussion where settling in had enabled the Student Advice Team to move from uncertainty and lack of confidence to feeling more reassured and more positive.

### **Planning future actions as a result of the EtE conversation**

The focus group participants reported that for the Student Advice team the actions discussed were all about getting back to basics – sorting out better service

planning which is shared and understood by everyone. Also, involving others in self-evaluation of the service and getting feedback from the people they work with. Actions for this group were less directly related to evaluation. This was more of an exercise in sorting out consistent new working practices for the new cross campus team that would help them with self-evaluation in the future. One of the main challenges for this group was clarifying the focus for the questions/discussion: individual or team. They were limited because of the context where the three previous groups were trying to merge into one new team, but had little shared experience to draw on. People in the discussion could only relate to their experiences of their previous team, which for some feedback from evaluation had been negative.

*C3-P2: The main thing that came out was that there needed to be improved planning, even of what our service was going to be, what the model was, because for one campus in particular, it was quite a shift. (Time point 2)*

*C3-P2: How we learn from evaluation ...again some of us thought, we're really quite strong in knowing how to do that and knowing what we're doing, but others felt we weren't at all. (Time point 2)*

The focus group participants reported that the Acting Team Manager followed up the meeting by preparing an overview document about the new Student Advice Services, and some actions have already been taken following the discussion such as: establishing weekly staff meetings at each of the three campuses; using senior team meetings for sharing information and dissemination between groups; setting up of a central information share point and cross campus teams working on shared tasks.

*C3-P1: It's an overview of the service that every member of staff now has and this is for the one-to-ones so that we can then evaluate... I really want them to evaluate themselves with this, so we can do it more together once they feel more comfortable and confident of themselves in it. (Time point 2)*

*C3-P2: I felt comfortable putting that together because we had had that (EtE conversation) because I now thought they'll understand what I mean by that. They*

*wouldn't have if I'd just put that out cold. That's what it was for me – a catalyst. It's been completely invaluable that way. (Time point 2)*

It seems that for the Student Advice team, their EtE conversation was a trigger for getting their change process moving. Their action-plan was not evaluation specific but it was designed to meet their specific needs at that time – their need for clarifying the role and purpose of the team and the individuals within it. The link between evaluation practice and organisational practice as viewed through the EtE process is interesting and will be explored further.

### **Follow-up – what's happened (evaluation-wise) since completing the EtE conversation?**

At the follow-up meeting with the Student Advice Acting Team Manager (C3-P2) and the Quality Team Manager (C3-P1) some six months after the EtE conversation there was a sense of frustration and disappointment. This was related to the change context that the merged colleges were still coming to terms with at different levels. For the Acting Team Manager there was disappointment when she had to step back as the permanent manager returned, and frustration when momentum from the EtE conversation was lost as the terms and arrangements for the new team were re-negotiated. For the Quality Team Manager there was a wider realisation about the impact of change for individuals and the need for wider change management strategy across the college.

*C3-P2: What actually happened was just after the last meeting the manager of the Student Advice Team came back to work. I then went to the senior advisor's role but work side by side (with the manager). What we've worked toward now is what I did before and what we were doing with the teams, the structure, the model of guidance, what it's about and then how we need to evaluate. You can't evaluate if people don't understand. Why they're evaluating, what they're evaluating, because they don't even really understand their role as such. (Time point 3)*

*C3-P2: I feel from this point of view we haven't really moved on at all because we're still trying to establish the main aims and goals of each team and each team*



*at the different campuses making up one big team. It's been quite challenging.*

(Time point 3)

*C3-P1 It is disappointing because the Acting Team Manager is what I would have called an 'early adopter' and a convert and was taking us in a direction of travel that we were all quite excited about. There are organisational issues, one of which is that having only been acting up it's been a difficult sell to other senior staff. I think the Acting Team Manager was just ... on a personal level, very disappointed that the impetus kind of stalled. Because she felt she would have been a lot further forward by now. (Time point 3)*

*C3-P1: But again, going back to the fact that the conversation, the negativity at the start of it, to the ... we're getting somewhere with this, just kind of outlines the importance of that conversation and within teams, within your three managers, your directors, having that conversation, might help to move things. (Time point 3)*

As a result of the EtE conversation, the Quality Team Manager reported that an adapted version of the EtE conversation was being adopted across the college as a more effective way to engage teams in the self-evaluation process.

*C3-P1: As a college we've become very committed to using the model. We've adopted some of the challenge questions and that's about to be launched as the college. We now have the challenge for me and my team and the college as a whole to move all managers in this direction, because we found uses in the model that we felt were right for the time and place. We are looking across the college at this as a model adding to and supporting our models for self-evaluation, but we are also looking in a parallel line on change and how we're managing change within the college. (Time point 3)*

*C3-P1: I think what it's identified actually ... I think we've got a bigger change management challenge than we even thought we had... you need a catalyst for change and just changing the structure doesn't manage change. (Time point 3)*

It would appear that for the Student Advice team the EtE conversation started as a negative experience but changed as it progressed to a point where ideas were triggered and plans were made. It was disappointing that more progress was not

made as discussed earlier, but there was evidence that the Acting Team Manager had experienced significant personal learning which is explored in more depth in Case 4. Case 3 also provides evidence of organisational learning in terms of the impact of change on individuals, and the value of developing tools that engage with individuals and provide the sorts of spaces where individuals and teams can explore change and move situations forward.

A summary of the overall findings from Organisation 2 are reported in section 4b.3.6, p. 212.

#### 4b.3.5 Case 4 The Acting Team Manager's story

This next section relates an individual narrative from the perspective of the Acting Team Manager. It is based on two sets of data collected from focus groups, one after the EtE conversation (Appendix 30 Individual transcript sample a) and the second discussion about six months later (Appendix 31 Individual transcript sample b). At the time of the focus groups the experiences of the Acting Team Manager seemed to stand out as personally significant. For example, focus group questions acted like a trigger giving permission for the Acting Team Manager to express their thoughts and feelings. This suggested a need for a different analysis approach that could better capture and explore this individual experience. The two transcripts were analysed using the Listener's Guide (Doucet & Mouthner, 2008) to identify context, relationships and the voice of 'I' reflecting how the individual perceived themselves within the situation. Two separate 'I' poems were constructed directly from the transcripts by highlighting the times when 'I' or 'me' were used in the personal speech of the Acting Team Manager. 'It' was also a term that was used interchangeably referring to the experience, the management opportunity or the EtE conversation. To distinguish 'it' from the personal 'I' references I have indented the 'it' phrases. This method draws our attention to the Acting Team Manager reflecting on the experience of meeting the newly merged team altogether for the first time. Six months later, the second 'I' poem was a reflection on personal experience and learning from being involved in the EtE process. The full analysis is presented as a case study using a simple temporal structure similar to the organisational case studies. For the purposes of giving the

analysis a more personal feel I have given the Acting Team Manager the made up name of Jenny.

### **Jenny's Story**

*In the beginning ... setting the scene*

This story explores Jenny's perceptions of herself in a team where she was previously a team member as she comes to terms with her new role as the Acting Team Manager. Jenny is a bit cautious, finding out and testing the territory. She is like an observer looking in and a little bit apart from the team 'feeling' herself into the role. She needed to build her confidence in the situation, but as a 'doer' she was also eager to get started, to respond, to do something, to intervene, to encourage and to support others. Her relationship with her manager was also important. This seemed very supportive, but as Jenny was new in post, she was a little cautious and keen to make a good start with the manager and the team.

Jenny's story has one big elephant in the room which is the recent merger of three 'old' teams coming together to find a new shared way for working together in their approach to self-evaluation. This context for change – bringing three distinct working cultures together to try to form a new shared culture, created uncertainty and cautiousness. This was evident from the reactions of the team as they worked through the EtE conversation there were signs that they were making progress only to hesitate and slip back into the previous rhetoric. For Jenny, the focus group discussion acted like a trigger, giving permission and space for Jenny to express her feelings, thoughts and observations as a participant in the EtE conversation and beyond. There is also a sense that this was an experience where she became more aware of herself and the other team members as the discussion progressed. She became able to 'see' more clearly what was really happening.

'I' Poem 1 – Jenny reflecting on the EtE conversation

*I didn't actually know the staff*

*I had literally just started actually*

*It was a great opportunity for me to find out*

*It gave me a good starting point*

*It let me see*

*It became very clear*

*I mean, I found it excellent because ...*

*It gave me great insight into ...*

*It made me realise.*

*I've done other things*

*I'm just ready to set up*

*I think we're at a stage where*

*I can start to work towards*

*I think one of the key things for me was ...*

*I think the main things that came out were ...*

*I think it was making them understand how ...*

*I've taken on to do*

*I think people talking, folk then became quite engaged in that.*

*I think what came out of it for a few folk*

*I was sitting observing*

*I felt there was a slight defensiveness and a fear, really*

*I sort of said, well, if that's how you feel, that's all right*

*I said that's fine*

*I just looked up and went write that down then*

*I said but that's how you feel right now, so write that down*

*I think they actually thought, right, I'm allowed to*

*I think they realised this isn't a test.*

*At first I thought, oh, I don't know if they're going to say anything*  
*At the end people were like we've done, oh, but I've done, you know?*  
*And for me, that was great because ...*  
*I could then see, and*  
*I had just started, and*  
*I realised was people do know the stuff.*  
*I've been doing other bits and pieces but it's all come from that meeting.*

*I think it helped*  
*I think they started to understand*  
*I know I'm not explaining it very well but it was just*  
*I think at points ... people were really, really into it.*  
*And then all of a sudden it would go down a wee tangent again.*  
*It allowed me to like*  
*I hear this*  
*I can then try and do something about that*  
*Do you know what I'm saying?*  
*I think people were able to voice aloud that and let us get together.*

It seems that for Jenny the EtE conversation provided a useful tool and starting point for herself in her new role, and for building the new team. It seemed to open up a frank discussion enabling the team to air their views and concerns and to explore and realise existing knowledge. Jenny came away from the meeting with a clear practical plan for how to interpret her new role and to support the team going forward.

### What happened next?

At the follow-up meeting with Jenny some six months after the EtE conversation, it was apparent that there was a sense of frustration and disappointment from having to step back from the Acting Team Manager role. In a second 'I' poem she reflects on her experiences over the preceding six months and what it has meant for her. What is a little surprising is that any negative feelings seem to have been put to one side, and what emerges suggests a developing reflective practitioner able to stand outside of the experience and take a positive learning perspective. Jenny's role as a catalyst for change was not insignificant in helping the new team to engage with the difficulties of change, and her reflections suggest that she did learn and develop through the combination of the Acting Team Manager opportunity and the EtE pilot project experience.

### 'I' Poem 2 – Jenny reflecting on her experiences

*I'll be absolutely up front; it's been absolutely invaluable for me that this project came along*

*I had been just given this role*

*It gave me an opportunity to get people together  
It made me look at the whole team  
It was a real impetus for me to start finding my own structure*

*What I wanted to do*

*How I was evaluating us, evaluating the team*

*It made me realise more about self-evaluation, you know.*

*I always did it*

*I was never in charge of it*

*I'd never actually thought about the responsibility of helping other people*

*I was a participant in an evaluation but not leading it in any way*

*I'm no longer doing that role*

*I wouldn't be the lead*

*I probably still would have the same mindset.*

*It's also made me realise that I've also got to do more training*

*I think it's also made me realise by doing this ... getting put into that role quite suddenly through huge change*

*I've also changed campus, having spent many years in another one and a new team and everything*

*I think what it did ... I think*

*It helps you focus on what you should be looking at and... about improving and taking away the fear of this major change*

*It doesn't mean you're wrong*

*It just means you're looking at how to improve*

*It means that you're looking at how to develop things*

*It came at the right time for me this project*

*I had to start thinking like that and if it hadn't come*

*I don't know if we would have ever really got properly together*

*I don't know if there would have been a baseline to work from*

*I don't know if this is making sense ... do you know what I'm saying?*

*I think it's made me realise that if you look at evaluation, instead of it dictating things*

*It allows other expertise input*

*It also helps you as well and makes you more open*

*It's okay to change things.*

*I think by this coming along*

*I think two weeks after I was given this, out of the blue, because of the circumstance*

*It was like, you're still going for another couple of weeks... but that went into months*

*It was a very uncertain time for me*

*I think back now*

*I think it made me put a plan together*

*I've got a plan.*

In Jenny's story there seems to have been a significant learning experience, but this would not necessarily have emerged simply from reading the transcript. The act of isolating and highlighting Jenny's personal voice and how she talks about herself has resulted in a clearer and surprisingly positive perspective.

#### 4b.3.6 Organisation findings

##### **Organisation 1 – a catalyst for change**

It would seem that for some participants from Organisation 1 using the EtE Toolkit stimulated a discussion about evaluation in a structured and engaging way that they had not experienced before. The conversation challenged them in exploring shared understanding and meaning about a range of evaluation topics in relation to their organisation. The conversation triggered discussion about issues of feedback and communication that are important to the role and purpose of the organisation. After the conversation, other issues emerged which relate to how actions and initiatives are taken forward and sustained. For this group there were challenges in terms of the demands on volunteers' time, there was an identified need for the group to meet more frequently to carry out its work, and there was acknowledgement that there was a need for high level strategic leadership if the role and work of the organisation was to be effective. It would seem that the EtE conversation created the space for critical reflection and discussion, and as a catalyst for change it raised some key points that are crucial for the future effectiveness of this group. This case also raises some learning points for the EtE conversation process.

- At the start of the EtE conversation there needs to be more attention given to introducing the process and how it works. For example, including an introductory activity to get participants more familiar with the EtE process and how it might be relevant to them.
- For this group there were concerns about some of the language used in the topics and questions. Language and meaning used within EtE would benefit from further clarification, but there is also merit in groups exploring meaning and agreeing shared understanding for particular concepts in relation to their organisation. It would be useful to introduce an additional activity at the start of the conversation to enable participants to explore their shared understanding about evaluation.



- There is also a need to consider carefully who should participate in the EtE conversation and the implications that this will have on future actions. For example, whilst the idea of piloting a new tool within a smaller group provides a useful testing ground, if there are expectations that real actions might come from such a pilot then consideration needs to be given to how to communicate and transfer ownership to a large group. For the organisation, the smaller pilot group were fully engaged with the EtE process and the actions that were identified, but it was difficult to transfer understanding and ownership of these actions within a wider group who had not participated in the original EtE conversation.
- It is clear from this group's experiences that facilitation of the EtE conversation process is crucial for keeping the conversation on track and also for managing the discussion that emerges. Although the EtE conversation was introduced to the group as a self-directed activity, it might be more helpful to have a facilitator from outside of the group which would have freed up the chair person to participate more fully in the discussion.

### **Organisation 2 – A new way to engage teams in self-evaluation**

For this organisation the experiences of using EtE were very different for each team. Where the Equality and Inclusion Team were clear about the team role and purpose participants experienced the EtE conversation as a useful way to generate a shared approach to self-evaluation, and a useful tool for integrating new members into the team. For the Student Advice Team, a more disparate starting point where participants were unclear about the team role and purpose and unclear about self-evaluation, the EtE conversation provided an opportunity to explore their uncertainties. By working through the themes and questions, participants moved from a negative position to a more positive one where they felt more confident about the team and their role. In addition, for the new Acting Team Manager, the EtE conversation provided a focused and structured way to learn about and engage with the team and with their new role. As a result, both teams felt confident about how to take forward practical actions from the discussions. Overall, in terms of process, it would seem that the EtE conversation had made a difference for both the teams with a strong emphasis on team involvement and participation. The structure and the questions had provided focus and stimulated critical discussion where participants could explore their ideas within a supportive environment. In terms of evaluation actions and change, Organisation 2 seems to have made a breakthrough in identifying their 'fourth way' for establishing new shared working practices in self-evaluation for the newly merged colleges.

*"From our point of view, it has been valuable, because we did, as the Equality and Inclusion team find it useful to do it in a different way, and we were quite enthusiastic afterwards to say, right, is this a fourth way for us.... Is this a new way of bringing teams together? And I think especially the experience in the Student Advice Team made us think, yes, because that was a pretty diverse team there." (Quality Team Manager, in relation to Case 2 and 3, Time point 3)*

Following completion of the EtE research pilot, the organisation has developed and adapted its self-evaluation process to model the EtE conversation, and plans to introduce this new approach across all its teams in the future. Cases 2,3 and 4

also highlighted a number of learning points for developing the EtE conversation in the future.

- More attention needs to be given at the start of the EtE conversation to introduce the concept and language of the EtE Model, especially regarding participants' perceptions of what evaluation means to them. It is particularly important not to make assumptions about individual levels of understanding but to provide space where teams can clarify what evaluation means to them. This could include adding a short introductory exercise to explore meanings of evaluation.
- For this organisation, facilitation was crucial, especially where one group started with a lack of awareness about evaluation and negative feelings about the change process. Without good facilitation this group's experiences may not have taken a positive turn. It is clear that more emphasis on facilitation is needed within the EtE process.
- The focus group participants commented on overlap or duplication between the themes and questions. Although they saw positives in revisiting topics, it would be helpful to review themes and questions to ensure that any overlap is minimised.
- Finally, for this organisation, using the EtE conversation enhanced team and individual engagement in the organisation's self-evaluation process. It seems to have stimulated deeper engagement for the more experienced Equality and Inclusion team, introduced new processes for the Student Advice team, and created a structured opportunity for the Acting Team Manager. This suggests it would be useful to explore the EtE conversation as a team and individual development tool.

## 4b.4 Findings 2 – Reflections on the field testing objectives

The case studies each provided rich insights into how the EtE Toolkit was used and adapted to different needs and contexts. They illustrate EtE in action as it moves from the theoretical propositions of the EtE Model to enable organisations to become evaluation-minded. The case studies explored what this meant in practice for organisations, for teams and for individual participants. This analysis was limited to the experiences of the two organisations involved in the field testing stage of this study. However, there is evidence that suggests that the EtE process did engage organisations and participants to think differently about evaluation, and their participation in EtE did trigger actions to address issues that they had identified. In this section each of the study 4b objectives are addressed from the perspective of the case study organisations to identify the impact of using EtE in terms of organisational and individual evaluation thinking and practices, and to critique, inform and guide further development of the EtE Toolkit. The analysis draws on the organisation case studies and the collated data from EtE evaluation questions which were included at the final set of focus group discussions (Time point 3 – Appendix 27/28). The collated data are included at Appendix 32.

### 4b.4.1 Usability of the EtE Toolkit

This objective was concerned with learning about how well the EtE process worked for the case study organisations and to identify aspects that they felt needed to be reviewed. The case study data provided a useful critique of the EtE Toolkit from the perspective of organisations engaging in the EtE process and identifies a number of areas for developing and improving the EtE Toolkit. Table 32 provides an overview of case study feedback relating to what participants found useful about using the EtE Toolkit. Table 33 provides an overview of case study feedback relating to the aspects that participants felt needed to be improved.

**Table 32 Study 4b Usability of the EtE Toolkit – What worked well?**

<b>The EtE Toolkit – what worked well?</b>	
<b>Organisation 1 – Health</b>	<b>Organisation 2 – Further Education</b>
<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relevant themes;</li> <li>- liked scoring, discussions, assessing strengths and weaknesses;</li> <li>- questions helped to focus discussion and get people thinking;</li> <li>- led to focused, structured and in-depth critical discussion.</li> </ul>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relevant themes and questions;</li> <li>- liked cards and questions opened up discussion more;</li> <li>- provided focus and structure for discussion;</li> <li>- questions seen as useful for guiding facilitation.</li> </ul>
<p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- challenging in a good way – it raised issues;</li> <li>- led to safe, open participation in group.</li> </ul>	<p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- very positive, enjoyable, interesting and engaging;</li> <li>- everyone participating in a focused and critical conversation;</li> <li>- process helped to build confidence;</li> <li>- enabled discussion where participants shared knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul>
<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- useful for organisation review.</li> </ul>	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- useful for introducing new staff and integrating others with different experience of evaluation;</li> <li>- value of the conversation process for engaging with the new team for first time;</li> <li>- useful tool for developing new manager role and engaging with new team e.g. to learn about new team and their needs.</li> </ul>

**Table 33 Study 4b Usability of the EtE Toolkit – What aspects need to be improved?**

<b>The EtE Toolkit – what aspects need to be improved?</b>	
<b>Organisation 1 – Health</b>	<b>Organisation 2 – Further Education</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- getting the process started – instructions;</li> <li>- role of facilitation;</li> <li>- language e.g. stakeholders, externality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- getting started – participants not having a shared understanding about evaluation;</li> <li>- need for facilitation;</li> <li>- potential overlap or duplication of questions.</li> </ul>

This evidence suggests that organisations experienced similar benefits from the EtE process in that the themes, questions and method provided a structured focus for groups to engage in discussion about evaluation. Importantly, the process seems to have stimulated critical debate where participants felt able to discuss challenges productively, to feel or to develop confidence with the level of discussion, and to be stimulated by the experience of sharing knowledge and expertise amongst peers. In addition, from the organisations' experiences, it was apparent that the EtE Toolkit could be used for different purposes such as organisation review, team review, introducing evaluation processes, extending evaluation expertise, and as an individual professional development tool. The field testing organisations provided feedback on the success of the EtE process as described above, but also highlighted a number of development areas including the introductory stages of the conversation, the role of facilitation, the language used to describe themes and potential overlap of questions, and target audiences or where and when to use the EtE process.

In terms of introduction, issues were highlighted about the need for checking the group's knowledge, understanding and awareness of evaluation before moving to the EtE themes and questions. This is important for avoiding making assumptions about group members which may leave them feeling excluded, uninformed and uncomfortable with the evaluation topic. This is contradictory to the EtE purposes of inclusion and engagement in evaluation. For example, for Organisation 2 the EtE conversation facilitators became aware that participants from the Student Advice Team were confused and initially felt that they did not know what evaluation meant, or they saw evaluation as a personal test and felt intimidated by this to the point that they did not engage with the EtE conversation at the start. A similar issue related to getting the EtE conversation started is ensuring that the instructions about how the EtE process works are clear so that participants can quickly move into their discussions. This was the experience of the Organisation 1 group who adapted the process by cutting out one of the steps. However, this lack of clarity of instructions might lead the group to adapting the process to the point where it becomes a different exercise. For example, by

moving away from using the cards to focus discussion on the EtE themes and questions Organisation 1 switched to each individual referring to the score sheet. In doing this the exercise may have become more of an administrative checklist than a shared conversation.

Relating to both these points is the need for and role of facilitation. The role of the facilitator in the EtE conversation is important for explaining how the EtE process works and supporting the process so that participants feel included, informed and able to engage with the conversation. This was difficult for Organisation 1 where the facilitator had a dual role, as the chair of the organisation they were also a conversation participant. This highlights the need for separating out the role of facilitator so that individuals can properly participate. For Organisation 2 a distinct facilitator role was used which proved invaluable for supporting the Student Advice Team which experienced a difficult start to the conversation. The facilitator role was needed for ensuring that individuals were supported and that the group were clear about what the EtE process involved. In addition, the separating out of the facilitator role freed up the Acting Team Manager to participate fully. This point about the need for facilitation was initially raised during the development stage described in Study 4a by the focus group, and whilst guidance for facilitation was included at the field testing stage, there is a need for this to be reviewed and strengthened in relation to the above points.

A further issue for the groups was the language used to describe the themes and the potential overlap or feeling of duplication of the questions. In terms of language, awareness and understanding about evaluation was an issue for one of the groups as described above. For Organisation 1 there was an initial sense that the evaluation language used such as stakeholders and externality was not relevant to their role as volunteers on a public advisory group. For the Student Advice Team in Organisation 2, there was also a feeling that they did not know what this language meant and that it did not relate to them. For the Equality and Inclusion Team there was not a problem with the language used, in fact they found that the themes and questions introduced a different way of thinking about

evaluation that extended their understanding and engaged them in a productive debate about their work. They did however feel that there was overlap in the questions for example, stakeholder involvement was discussed a number of times. In contrast, the Student Advice Team found that overlap and seemingly duplication of questions was helpful to building their confidence and realisation that evaluation and the language used within the EtE Themes and questions were relevant to them. It seems that different groups respond to the EtE language, themes and questions in different ways depending on their context, and that the process of discussing meaning is part of the learning process. However, there is clearly scope to review and revise the language, themes and questions to minimise potential confusion but to retain the scope for discussion and shared learning.

Finally, the case studies highlight the different outcomes that groups experience through using the EtE Toolkit. On the one hand this is dependent on how the toolkit was used and interpreted by the different groups and their facilitators. On the other hand, it does raise questions about who or which groups the EtE Toolkit is suitable for. For example, Organisation 1 chose to pilot the EtE conversation within a smaller group before extending it to a wider organisation group. This raised a problem of ownership of actions when trying to widen involvement. For Organisation 2, piloting the EtE Toolkit with two teams enabled the organisation to build their experience of using the Toolkit and learn about how different groups responded. This enabled them to adapt and scale up their use of the toolkit prior to use across all their team. As with the previous point, different groups will experience their use of the EtE Toolkit differently and need to plan its use depending on their needs and context. It would perhaps be helpful to provide more information within the Toolkit about different scenarios to help organisations with their planning.



#### 4b.4.2 How organisations used the EtE Toolkit to make changes to their evaluation practices

This objective explores learning points from how each of the organisations used the Toolkit. It focuses on the seven EtE Themes to explore the impact and relevance of each one and to highlight revisions based on organisations' experience and feedback. The EtE Model does not advocate for a specific sequence or order of the themes but relies on the EtE conversation to facilitate groups to democratically arrive at the theme that is most relevant to their needs at that time. This does seem to have occurred where one group focused on the learning theme, another group focused on the externality theme and another group focused on the purposes theme. Whilst this provides a relevant starting point for each groups' current evaluation actions, it is not known how they would respond to carrying out a second EtE conversation at a later stage. The assumption is that learning and subsequent actions from the first EtE Conversation would lead them to focusing on a different theme. This is untested in this study but provides potential for future studies especially when considering issues of sustaining evaluation over time. The sequence used in the following discussion of the EtE themes starts with the themes that the case study organisations focused on.

##### **Learning theme**

The 'Learning' theme covers two aspects, one being learning from evaluation and feedback from stakeholders and the other being learning about how to do evaluation or developing the necessary skills and knowledge required. One of the groups chose to focus on the theme of learning from evaluation. They were interested in getting feedback and learning from feedback as a result of their activities. Through the EtE Conversation they felt that they had increased their awareness about what the group was doing, but were disappointed that the group were not sharing more information or getting feedback on impact or the difference they were making. This led the group to piloting a diary of involvement with group members. They did start their diary of involvement but found that progress was slow as other issues emerged such as not meeting frequently

enough, having difficulties transferring pilot ideas to larger group, and realising the need for higher level strategic support for the role and function of the group. Whilst the learning theme did not lead directly to establishing a successful diary of involvement, it does seem to have triggered other issues and learning points that affect the success and impact of the group. Since the completion of the EtE pilot, the group have restructured their meeting schedule and they have benefited from shared learning amongst members from their diary. Learning from evaluation seems to be a relevant theme, but by including a second aspect of 'learning to' the theme has perhaps become too broad. There is a risk that groups will be attracted to the first aspect and not give the same attention to the second aspect. There is no specific evidence of this from this study, but it might be helpful to consider splitting these two distinct aspects into two separate themes. Retaining the 'learning from' evaluation theme and introducing a new theme around evaluation skills and knowledge development so recognising this distinct aspect more clearly.

### **Externality theme**

The externality theme raises questions about how the organisation introduces an external element into the evaluation process, adds credibility and objectiveness and increases the potential for critical review and learning. This might involve using an external evaluator or seeking peer review between teams or organisations. This theme generated considerable discussion by groups mainly due to understanding what it meant for them. The language used like the term 'externality' was seen as difficult for some groups and would benefit from some revisions. However, this did have relevance for one of the groups who chose to focus on the externality theme. They did combine it with aspects from other themes including stakeholder feedback and dissemination. They highlighted a need for sharing examples of good news stories. Their EtE conversation had got them thinking about who they work with, and what kind of feedback they get from different stakeholders. They started to view externality as 360-degree feedback. Their discussion also highlighted an issue about the links between different services and the teaching faculties. As a result of this a series of

meetings with faculty teams are now planned, and cross campus team meetings are used for ongoing self-evaluation activity.

### **Purposes theme**

The purposes theme focuses on how evaluation is often driven by the requirements of funders and is a way of accounting at the end of a project. It highlights other potential evaluation purposes include learning, improvement, giving voice to a particular group, and influencing policy. For many groups this theme might seem like an ideal starting place to get the basics right. However, the team that focused on the purposes theme went back a step further. They felt that their team did not have clarity of purpose about its role and function within the wider organisational setting. For this team, as the process developed, their participation increased and their confidence grew. From their EtE conversation they felt that establishing clear guiding organisational practices was important before self-evaluation could take place. The Team Manager became aware of the challenges for the new team in the context of wider organisational change and the need for clarifying the team's role and understanding of self-evaluation. The Team Manager did produce an action plan for the team and that plan was seen as more valid because it was informed by the team conversation. In terms of the EtE theme this example does highlight the need to widen the purposes theme to check that groups are clear about their overall purpose before introducing discussion about evaluation purposes.

### **Dissemination theme**

This theme did not become the focus for any of the groups but they did all discuss the importance of sharing information and feedback, and aspects of this theme were incorporated into their different actions for example sharing feedback with wider stakeholders. In the earlier Study 2 the organisation did highlight the importance of dissemination which was added as a theme. They described how the attention given to conducting evaluations can lead a group to missing out the sharing and dissemination stage. They felt that this was a crucial activity for linking one evaluation to the next in terms of learning from findings and feedback, and

provided an opportunity to communicate with stakeholders and to recognise the impact of the organisation.

### **Involvement theme**

This theme focuses on involving stakeholders in evaluation, encouraging organisations to tap into the views of key players, especially the people who they support. Involvement activities include planning decisions, designing methods, gathering information, analysing and reporting as well as contributing views. This was a theme that none of the groups chose to focus on but they did discuss the role of stakeholders and realised how they wanted to involve them. For example, Case 1 was most keen to involve other participants and key players in getting feedback on the impact of the service. This theme also emphasises the participatory aspect of evaluation. The evidence from the groups suggests that they all experienced higher levels of engagement in discussion about evaluation and that the participatory nature of the EtE conversation had provided a structure to facilitate their involvement. However, this might be considered as a first step in realising the value of participation and that further challenges exist in terms of involving their stakeholders more.

### **Leadership theme**

This theme focuses on how evaluation is dependent on commitment from the very top to confirm that it is a valued priority. This is a role for the organisation's Board and senior management. The theme also highlights how evaluation leadership involves other roles for example: A manager can initiate and support evaluation; an evaluation officer or team can champion practical implementation; and individuals can lead small scale evaluation activities like case studies. None of the EtE conversation groups chose to focus on this theme but there are connections to their experiences such as the leadership shown by the Team Manager to support the team experiencing the difficulties and issues from organisational change; the Quality Manager championing the EtE pilot and the subsequent role out of EtE across the organisation; and the team preparing to get feedback from peers and share its results more widely.

### **Context theme**

This theme focuses on how evaluation contributes to the bigger organisational picture and is influenced by internal factors such as the board or senior management's commitment, and external factors such as funding, government policy and local priorities. It was interesting that through their participation in EtE, both organisations encountered more general organisational challenges whether it was realising the limits of other structural aspects such as the frequency of meetings, or the need for high level strategic backing, or resource issues such as staff changes, or the cultural changes encountered when organisations merge and new teams are formed. This link between evaluation practice in organisations and wider organisational development is perhaps a reflection of the integrated or embedded nature of evaluation within organisational life. It perhaps highlights too that evaluation might be a more hidden aspect when staff comment that 'they didn't realise that what they did was evaluation'. This connection to wider organisational contexts also links back to the discussion in Study 3 in terms of Evaluation Capacity Building and its recognition of organisational context as a significant influencing factor in organisational evaluation policy and practice. Study 3 led to the addition of the 'Context' theme. However, none of the cases explicitly highlighted this as the issue that they wanted to focus on. This might be because the theme and/or questions did not trigger discussion about the specific contextual issues that were relevant to them, or it might be that organisational context issues are more likely to be raised by personnel in more strategic positions such as the overall quality manager. Alternatively, these issues may have emerged as organisations or teams started to implement their evaluation action plans. For example, Organisation 1 realised that meeting infrequently was limiting their capacity to engage with crucial discussions and to carry forward actions. As a result, they re-planned their meeting schedule. They had previously not been aware of this as an issue. Organisation 2 became more aware of the issues of change management on teams and individuals as a result of one team's difficulties with personnel changes and authority. They were able to respond to this because there was a higher level manager involved in implementing the EtE conversation. In terms of revisions to

the Toolkit it might be helpful to separate out the 'Context' theme as a distinct part of the conversation after groups have considered the other themes. This would help to emphasise the global nature of the organisational context for evaluation. The description and questions could also be revised based on the case study organisations' experience and feedback.

It would seem that each of the themes, to different extents, were relevant to the case study organisations. The process provided them with a structured and focused way to critically review their evaluation practices, and they did this in a way that created high levels of participation and engagement. It is interesting that from this analysis organisations were able to focus on a theme that seemed most relevant to them, whilst also incorporating aspects from other themes. The overlap between the themes which was raised as a potential issue by one of the groups, seems to have enhanced the process. Future iterations of the EtE Toolkit might bring a different theme to the foreground.

#### **4b.4.3 How the EtE Model has influenced the evaluation discourse within the case study organisations**

This objective was concerned with learning about a deeper and more sustainable change in organisations' evaluative thinking and practices following their use of the EtE Toolkit. The data suggests that for the groups involved in this research study there was evidence of a move towards becoming more evaluation-minded. However, this has to be considered as a focused development for the team involved and not representative of change across the whole organisation. This point was particularly clear for Organisation 1 which highlighted the challenges of transferring learning from the pilot EtE Toolkit to the wider group.

##### **Increased evaluation awareness**

Firstly, there seems to have been an increased awareness of and participation in evaluation amongst staff and volunteers participating in this research study. Organisation 2 reported that there was a notable shift in attitudes towards

evaluation, that there had been increased participation and contribution to the organisation's self-evaluation process and that staff felt empowered about evaluation.

### **Links between evaluation and other quality assurance processes**

Both of the case study organisations had linked their involvement in EtE with other organisational quality assurance processes. Organisation 1 had made the connection with their strategic plan and other external quality processes that they were involved with such as the Investing in Volunteers Standards and the Participation Standards applied in National Health Service settings. This organisation felt that their work through EtE would complement these other processes. Organisation 2 made an explicit link with the government inspection processes that it was required to participate in. This organisation felt that their involvement with the EtE process had helped to engage wider staff groups in this process.

### **Better internal communication**

Organisation 2 reported that their participation in the EtE evaluative conversation had led more generally to better internal communications. They had realised the value of participation and open communication amongst team members to generate confidence and ownership. There was increased appreciation of achievements or what they were doing well, as well as looking at issues. For example, the Equality and Inclusion Team realised that they were not sharing good news stories but were focusing solely on the issues and problems. Staff described 'a feeling that staff meetings have become more open and discursive following the EtE conversation'. Communication and team meetings were also a critical learning point for the Student Advice Team where they realised that regular contact was important in establishing new teams.

### **Practical evaluation actions leading to wider organisational change**

A particular theme that has emerged from the data was how evaluation actions planned through the EtE conversations had resulted in other wider organisational change actions. For example, Case 1 started with keeping an evaluation diary for sharing feedback from meetings and events and in addition realised that they needed to revise their meeting structures and schedule. Case 3 realised that there was a need for clear plans and shared understanding as a base line before developing self-evaluation across the teams. For Organisation 2, this led to a realisation of the wider impact of change on individuals and teams and the need for management of change strategies.

### **Future plans to widen the use of EtE across the organisation**

Both organisations had plans to widen their use of EtE in the future. Organisation 1 had plans to use the EtE Toolkit as an annual planning activity, and Organisation 2 had adapted the EtE conversation for supporting self-evaluation across all the college teams. Clearly the data from this study was a small snapshot on evaluation mindedness in two organisations, but the data suggests that using the EtE Toolkit had stimulated increased awareness and engagement with evaluation processes across the organisations. In addition, both organisations were thinking more widely about evaluation, its links to other processes and how they planned to take their use of EtE forward in the future.



## 4b.5 Conclusion

This study worked through a development research process which involved creating an initial prototype of the EtE Toolkit (v1), reviewing and refining the Toolkit through feedback from a practitioner focus group, and field testing the EtE Toolkit (v2) in action in organisations. The field testing has led to a deeper understanding of the EtE Model and how the processes and themes of the EtE Toolkit work in practice. Data from the experience of the two organisations provided examples and a critique of the EtE process to enable further refinement.

### 4b.5.1 Developing the EtE Toolkit (v3)

A practical outcome from this study is the identification of specific development points from the experiences of the organisations and individual cases. A number of actions can be identified including:

- develop EtE website to highlight benefits from using EtE, highlight different purposes and provide scenarios or examples to show EtE in Action;
- explore and promote the potential role of EtE as an engagement tool for teams: to introduce evaluation process and/or to extend their evaluation practice;
- explore and promote the potential role of EtE as a professional development tool;
- improve the Toolkit introduction and instructions to help participants understand the process as quickly as possible;
- include an introductory activity for participants to explore and share their understanding about evaluation in order to establish the starting point for the group and to help the facilitator to adapt the process to the needs of the group;
- review language, themes and questions for clarity of meaning and to check for unhelpful overlap;
- review facilitation guidance – clarify roles and emphasise especially at the start of the process;

- provide guidance on who should participate and different scenarios showing the sorts of experience that groups might expect from engaging with the EtE Toolkit;
- split the Learning theme into two new themes: Learning from evaluation and Skills and knowledge development;
- distinguish the organisational context theme as a distinct activity following the discussion of themes.

## Conclusion

At the start of this research I set out to examine approaches to evaluation that validate experience and performance in ways that are useful for individuals, organisations and communities. I have investigated themes of participation and empowerment in the context of evaluation and developed an alternative evaluation discourse through the EtE Model. The EtE Model and Toolkit are pragmatic in that there is an expectation that critical discussion will lead to practical action for evaluation improvement. The EtE Model and Toolkit then are not a 'how to do evaluation' guide but are a meta-evaluation of evaluation processes. This research has the potential to influence evaluation policy and practice for government and funders, for Third Sector Organisations and for practitioners in a way that balances the demands for accountability with stakeholder-led evaluation processes.

Theoretically, the EtE Model and Toolkit are underpinned by research and evaluation theory that emphasise participation, collaboration and democratic engagement. New literature relating to collaborative approaches to evaluation (CAE) (Shulha, Whitmore, Cousins, Gilbert and Al Hudib, 2016) defines principles for guiding evaluation practice where evaluation knowledge is collaboratively produced by evaluators and stakeholders. This notion relates to the theoretical ideas of Heron and Reason (1997) emphasising the partnership between stakeholder participants and evaluators/researchers. One distinction of this new literature is that it zooms in on the perspective of evaluators and their role in creating the conditions for collaborative approaches to evaluation such as fostering meaningful relationships of trust, respect and transparency. This consideration of the evaluator role goes beyond Volkov's (2011) internal evaluation officer as an agent for positive change, evaluation capacity building and decision making in organisations. The EtE model is consistent with CAE principles such as promoting participatory processes and evaluative thinking, but goes further by raising the potential for a shared or alternative evaluator role where

other stakeholders or an evaluation 'team' collectively inform and guide collaborative evaluation design and decisions. With the increased attention given by funders to encouraging self-evaluation processes, the notion of the evaluation 'team' creates greater potential for the inclusion of wider stakeholder perspectives and internal critique.

However, it would be simplistic to consider collaborative evaluation processes in isolation without taking account of the political, financial and social contexts that influence evaluation motivation and needs in organisations. Organisations cannot ignore the driver of fiscal accountability, nor can they dismiss the relationship of power between funder and funded even when funders want to shift towards more open and supportive funding relationships. The bottom line is a funder's requirement to make funding decisions and an organisation's need to sustain levels of funding. These real-life contexts challenge an organisation to embrace the continuing results and measurement oriented funding environment (Harlock, 2013) but also seek to reflect the values and principles of their mission and purpose. This is especially so for Third Sector Organisations which promote inclusion, stakeholder involvement and empowerment. In these situations, organisations need to be pragmatic in their evaluation approaches. They need to adapt the ways that evaluation serves their multiple needs. This suggests a need to find ways to combine the principles of collaborative approaches to evaluation or the participatory nature of the EtE Model with more positivist performance measurement and results.

Further theoretical points are raised in the following discussions about the participatory nature of the EtE Model, about the relatedness of EtE to evaluation capacity building models and discussion about what 'evaluation-mindedness' means in the context of organisations is extended.

### **Participation and the participatory nature of the EtE Model and Toolkit**

This research was influenced by definitions of participatory research which recognise research participants as partners in a collaborative research endeavour with the researcher. I applied this definition by endeavouring to include research participants in the empirical studies reported in this thesis. This raised questions about different participant voices and the relationships that shaped different levels of influence. The voice of the ‘powerless’ or those less likely to have their voice heard was explored alongside other stakeholder voices including the organisation, government, funders and the evaluator. The frameworks of Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) clarify two different configurations of these stakeholder relationships within evaluation. Most significantly these frameworks make the distinction between the practical application of evaluation (P-PE) in terms of learning, improvement and change, and the transformative role of evaluation (T-PE) in terms of influencing social change. In this research my focus on evaluation through the context of organisations suggested a closer alignment with P-PE.

The stakeholder voices and relationships within this research were different depending on the context for each of the organisations. In Study 4b, Case 1, the principal stakeholder voices were the voluntary members supported by health council staff. In Study 4b, Cases 2,3 and 4, the principal stakeholder voices were the staff teams supported by the quality team manager and facilitators. These cases aspired to extend stakeholder involvement to include a wider circle of service users and strategic partners, but they were bounded by the organisation arrangements that shaped the power relations between stakeholders. For example, in Study 4b the Case 1 participants realised the limits of their influence and voice if they did not have authentic strategic support. In Case 2 and 3, the participant teams were keen to engage with and influence the self-evaluation process, but in the context of merger and government demands it was unclear whether the influence and voice of these teams would be prioritised. In Case 4, the individual voice was motivated to develop her team yet was set back by employment status and management change. In these case studies, it could be

argued that the voice of the ‘powerless’ or those less likely to have their voice heard were the volunteers on the committee and the staff within a large organisation. However, in the context of user involvement and participatory evaluation there was a lack of a crucial patient and student voice. In contrast, the organisation in Study 2 explicitly included wider stakeholder involvement from service users, strategic partners, staff, managers, and volunteers. This organisation was influenced by two priorities: firstly, learning about and improving services from stakeholder involvement and feedback, and secondly the organisation’s need to account to funders. For this organisation, stakeholder involvement was seen as an important contribution to the overall evaluation purpose. Each of these organisations appear to be consistent with the P-PE framework. A further test for the EtE Model is how well or whether it would fit with contexts that prioritise transformation (T-PE) and the voices of social action and change.

### **EtE’s relationship with ECB models**

A further influence highlighted in Study 3 came from the field of Evaluation Capacity Building or ECB and impact measurement in the UK. This body of work was a reference point for aligning the EtE Model with ECB definitions and impact practice indicators. This provided an important angle from which to review EtE. This critical review identified the differences and similarities, but also aspects of EtE that needed to be addressed such as the contextual location of evaluation policy and practice within wider organisational strategy. Findings suggested that EtE shares similarities with ECB models, but more significantly, that EtE encompasses participatory and collaborative practices highlighted by Labin et al. (2012) as crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of evaluation capacity building. One factor that emerged from the ECB literature was the separation of evaluation capacity building from conducting evaluations. An emphasis on organisational ‘preparedness’ for conducting evaluation implied that organisations should first be evaluation-prepared before they conduct evaluations. I argued that this created the potential for excluding organisations or groups who were not

evaluation 'prepared' and that a more likely starting point for evaluation was the organisational need to conduct evaluations. Given the starting points for each of the organisations in this research, their first need was to conduct evaluations but they recognised that reviewing their evaluation practices through their use of the EtE Toolkit had enhanced their ability to conduct meaningful evaluations. This suggests that the interaction between evaluation preparedness or capacity and the need to conduct evaluation is dynamic, but the bottom line is that organisations are firstly motivated by their need to evaluate. It is my view that evaluation capacity building models should be inclusive and accessible so that organisations can build evaluation skills and expertise alongside the need to conduct evaluations and that this is not a standardised process but one that engages participants and increases motivation for evaluation.

In the above discussion evaluation capacity building has been explored in terms of organisational evaluation skills, knowledge and strategic development which could be described as a more direct approach to evaluation capacity building. This is contrasted with the more indirect approach which builds evaluation capacity in tandem with conducting evaluations. Both these modes are concerned with the capacity to 'do' evaluation and are a means to an end. Yet in the context of organisations and their motivation to do evaluation, there is also a priority for the effective 'use' of evaluations. This was evident in Study 2 where the case study organisation used evaluation to secure funding, to improve practice and services and to engage with stakeholders. This research suggests three levels of evaluation capacity building – capacity to 'do' evaluation, capacity to 'use' evaluation and capacity to critically 'review' evaluations. Theoretically, this threesome combines direct and indirect capacity building models with the pragmatics of a utilisation-focus, and the critical reflection on evaluation process offered through the EtE Model. A real test for the EtE Model and Toolkit lies in how using EtE leads directly to improved organisation, team and individual capacity to do evaluations, to use evaluations, to reflect on evaluations and in so doing to strengthen stakeholder involvement.

### **Towards becoming 'evaluation-minded'**

Empirical evidence from this research suggested that participants and organisations became more evaluation aware, more self-determining about evaluation decisions and more inclusive in their evaluation practices. It seems that for the case study organisations and individuals there was an openness and commitment to the way they thought about, planned and conducted their evaluations. This illustrates my comments in the previous section of the dynamic between evaluation capacity building and the need to conduct evaluations. There were multiple outcomes for these organisations and individuals in terms of more engaged stakeholders, increased evaluation capacity and increased self-awareness about the context that they were operating in. In addition, there was evidence to suggest that these organisations and individuals were starting to drive their own evaluation decisions. These organisations could reasonably be described as becoming more evaluation-minded.

In Study 2, the longitudinal case study organisation provided evidence of a substantial commitment to learning and improving evaluation policy and practice over the five-year period reviewed. In the end the organisation chose to become independent from the external evaluator, which represented a new starting point where they were the drivers of their own evaluation decisions. In Study 4b, Case 1 participants found themselves in a challenging position, realising the need for more effective internal structures and better strategic support for achieving their purposes. Using the EtE Toolkit had been a trigger for this realisation. In Case 2,3 and 4, the organisation had considerable experience in self-evaluation as part of its government review process, but was experiencing challenges with the formation of new teams following merger. Case study participants identified a need to find a way to engage individuals and teams in the evaluation process, and to bridge the gap between strategic decision makers, managers and practitioners. The teams using the EtE Toolkit learned about the value of participation and inclusion of staff in the self-evaluation process. As a result of their involvement in this research Organisation 2 has introduced the EtE process across all of its service teams.





## Methodological approaches and limitations

### Using an iterative approach

The iterative approach I used in this research started by exploring a broad range of ideas in the literature review which I then developed through subsequent empirical studies. The research pathway that emerged was shaped by a dialectic process between examining the influences of theory and literature, and the empirical influences from exploring and testing ideas in action. An advantage of this approach was that starting from a broad base enabled the research to become deeper and more focussed as it was developed. A further advantage was that each study was flexible to respond to the needs and direction of the research. An iterative approach also enabled me to be more flexible in how I used literature. The initial literature review was used to map out the broad context of my topic and to frame the research. I revisited literature as new and more specific literature was identified to respond to new needs, for example aligning the EtE Model to other ECB models in Study 3. Whilst an iterative approach provides a flexible and responsive research design, there are limitations or issues to be aware of, for example how and by whom decisions about the direction of the research are taken. I was conscious that decisions about the direction of my research were taken largely by me through discussion with my supervisors. Each of my empirical research studies involved participants at a number of levels from deciding which documents to include, to facilitating their EtE conversations, to feedback for informing revisions of the EtE Toolkit. However, there was no continuity of these participants or involvement in other parts of the research. Planning to include participants more widely in my research decision making would have led to a richer contribution and would have been more consistent with participatory approaches.

### Using a case study approach

Using a case study approach provided the opportunity for extensive in-depth investigation into three organisations and the collection of rich data. However, case study research remains a contested method due to its perceived limited

scope to generalise findings and its subjective nature. Counter arguments in support of case study research assert the importance of case study in expanding and generating theory. It is my view that the case study approach and field testing I used in this research does provide evidence that can be generalised across organisations that can 'see' or judge for themselves the relevance and potential application of the EtE Model and Toolkit within their own organisational context. However, by choosing an in-depth method, there were limitations to the size and scope of this study. For example, there was a challenge in deciding which organisations to include in the field testing. This resulted in outstanding questions about how well or whether the EtE Model and Toolkit would apply within private sector organisations or other sectors. In addition, case study organisations were exclusively Scottish. There is scope for wider investigation within the UK, Europe and beyond.

### **Using narrative within the case study design**

An unplanned outcome from Study 4b Organisation 2 was the emergence of a substantial individual narrative (Case 4). It was substantial in that it was clearly important for the individual involved to tell their story, yet within the transcripts it felt like the story as experienced during the focus groups was not clearly reflected. In addition, I had not planned methodologically for handling an individual narrative. This caused me to seek out a suitable approach to narrative analysis. The two 'I' poems created from within the transcripts were particularly useful for illuminating the individual story. Whilst this narrative analysis approach provided an interpretive tool that uncovered individual experience and learning there were limitations. Firstly, the interpretation of the transcript was from my researcher perspective casting the participant in a passive role. An analysis approach that would be more in keeping with participatory evaluation would have been to include the participant in the analysis and interpretation of their own transcript. A further issue was the narrow focus on one individual voice. Whilst this was intentional from the point of view of illuminating an otherwise unheard narrative,

the inclusion of other stakeholder voices would have reflected different viewpoints and potentially new insights for the participant.

### **Ethical challenges**

A very practical challenge that I encountered in Study 2 and Study 4b was the confidentiality of the research participants. This appears a straightforward issue where codes are used to anonymise organisations and individuals, and where content is scrutinised carefully to remove identifiers. In accordance with good ethical practice this was how I have proceeded. However, I think that this raises two dilemmas. Firstly, whilst respecting individual choices, remaining anonymous does not allow the organisation or the individuals to be recognised for their participation and sometimes this is seen as an important benefit. For example, in Study 2 the organisation felt that their involvement in a research project was an important indicator of the organisation's development and growth. They felt that this was good evidence of their commitment to critical evaluation and they could share this recognition with their stakeholders. Another dilemma when using numbers to identify case studies is that in doing so the narratives no longer 'feel' like real experiences real organisations and real people. One solution is to allocate pseudonyms in the case of individuals. I feel that this has worked well for the individual 'I' poems helping the reader to 'see' into human experience as it was expressed by the individual. However, this would not have worked for the organisations where a more structured approach was needed to help make sense of complex organisational arrangements. I think that for this research I resolved this in terms of good ethical practice, however within a participatory approach I think there should be more scope for negotiating ways to reflect and recognise organisational and individual participation. Whilst all ethical requirements such as informed consent were followed, within the research paradigm that I am aspiring to work within, I do feel that more attention should be given to these concerns at the research design stage and more creative ways for addressing them should be investigated.

## Implications for evaluation policy and practice

As a result of this research there are a number of implications for evaluation policy and practice for government and funders, for Third Sector Organisations, for practitioners and for evaluation support agencies.

### **Complementing measurement approaches to evaluation as a response to the drive for accountability**

The role of government and funding bodies was highlighted early on as a significant driver for determining the trends in evaluation. Evidence from the literature and from the field of evaluation practice indicated a continuing narrow emphasis on measurement, results and accountability. EtE does not 'measure' but has some strong messages about results and accountability. It looks wider and reveals results in areas that would not otherwise be measured such as influence through dissemination. It takes accountability more seriously because it identifies and includes a wider range of stakeholders to whom organisations are accountable, thus providing richer insights for the main funders.

### **Supporting self-evaluation and quality assurance processes**

Self-evaluation and quality assurance are becoming processes by which organisations review and evaluate their performance and demonstrate their policy and practices. Self-evaluation is linked to an organisational need to report to funders and to compete successfully in the funding arena. Quality assurance is linked to organisations' need to demonstrate good practice often in relation to externally set quality indicators. This was evident in Study 4b where Organisation 1 described the requirement to comply with the health services Participation Standards, and Organisation 2 was subject to annual government inspection against a set of prescribed quality indicators. It was also clear from what these organisations reported, that funders, government and Quality Assurance schemes all require that organisations make decisions about how they respond to these demands. Organisations that are more evaluation aware and engage with a wider

group of stakeholders are likely to be in a stronger or more confident position to engage in these processes. EtE, as has been shown by the organisations in this research, can enable organisations to engage with self-evaluation and quality assurance processes, helping them to develop new evaluation policy commitments and increase evaluation confidence to drive their evaluation decisions and develop quality evaluation practices. In addition, EtE could support an alternative approach for government and funders seeking to engage in more participative and empowering ways with funded organisations. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015) suggests that this is a priority for government, and funders and inspection agencies which adopt a self-evaluation approach give a clear message that they want to establish a different relationship with the organisations they engage with. In this context, EtE could provide a linking tool for facilitating more empowered relationships between organisations, government and funders.

### **EtE as a new evaluation capacity building tool**

It is clear from the Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) literature that evaluation policy and process are important factors for organisations conducting evaluations. A range of ECB indicators exist as shown in Study 3, yet there appear to be few practical evaluation capacity building tools available other than checklists. In addition, organisations such as Evaluation Support Scotland and Inspiring Impact emphasise a continuing need to find ways to facilitate not only how organisations report on impact and outcomes, but also how organisations develop and review evaluation policy and process. This is especially the case for smaller organisations where evidence suggests there are skills gaps and limited capacity. In this context, the EtE Model and Toolkit goes beyond addressing the need for practical evaluation capacity building tools. EtE provides more than a checklist as it supports inclusive and participatory discussion amongst key stakeholders. The EtE Toolkit has potential as an organisation review tool, and as a team and professional development tool, for example as a means of review and development actions for improving evaluation practice. This could be linked to a

team evaluation learning session and/or professional development such as a diary for use as part of a practitioner's CV or CPD record. There is also scope for working with organisations like Evaluation Support Scotland and Inspiring Impact to promote the EtE Model and Toolkit as a new evaluation capacity building tool with potential application across different sectors.

## Future research

### **Sustainable impact from using the EtE Toolkit**

One of the aims of the EtE Model was to create sustainable evaluation improvements in organisations. In Study 4, the field testing process did follow-up with organisations six months after their EtE Conversation to find out if there had been any longer term change. This was limited to a single iteration of EtE and did not explore the effects of a further iteration. Due to the time line of the doctoral studies, at this stage the longer term implications and effects from using EtE are untested. Future research questions might examine whether organisations sustain EtE conversations over time and whether there are any further changes to their thinking and evaluation practice.

### **Pragmatic versus strategic drivers for evaluation policy and practice in organisations**

In Study 3 I raised concerns about how effective a pragmatic or 'bottom-up' approach to evaluation could influence strategic decision making, as opposed to how effective a strategic or 'top-down' approach can sustain and empower practitioner engagement. This is an important issue given the underpinning participatory and empowerment theory of this research. Future research questions might examine what the most effective drivers are for long term sustainability of an empowering evaluation framework in organisations, and further investigate the relationship between pragmatic and strategic drivers.

### **The role of externality within participatory evaluation**

EtE's 'Externality' theme was a key distinction from Evaluation Capacity Building models, the Code of Good Impact practice, Measuring Up and the Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) framework. Externality highlights the role of critical review and external input to evaluation practice. In this study I have suggested that this external input can be broad encompassing the contribution from different stakeholders as well as from an external evaluator. This might involve for example community consultation and feedback; service users involved in decision making roles within the evaluation process; an expanded role of external evaluator as facilitator, coach and critical friend; or it might involve peer review as staff teams implement self-evaluation processes. This theme extends discussion on externality and the role of evaluator or the evaluation team into new areas. Future research questions might explore more explicitly the different forms that this type of externality might take in practice and how the different roles of the evaluator or evaluation team might influence organisations' evaluation practice.

## **Original contribution**

### **Theoretical contribution**

This research has made an original contribution to the theory and practice of evaluation by developing a model and toolkit for engaging key evaluation stakeholders in a process of critical review of evaluation policy and practice or a meta-evaluation of evaluation. It has applied the concept of evaluation-mindedness to organisations, teams and individuals. In addition, the EtE theme of 'Externality' highlights a focus on external input and feedback from evaluation participants and stakeholders within the evaluation process. The EtE Model has been translated into the EtE Toolkit as a means for organisations, teams and individuals to apply the ideas within the model so that they might improve their evaluation policy and practice. Importantly, within the EtE process, decisions about improvement and actions are driven from within the team and focus on the starting point which is most relevant to their context. In this way the EtE Model



and Toolkit are consistent with an overall constructivist paradigm in that the Toolkit uses a participatory and collaborative process to engage key evaluation stakeholders in this critical review. It has yet to be tested with other key stakeholders such as service users and community members.

### **Alternative evaluation discourse**

This research offers an alternative evaluation discourse to balance a continuing emphasis on measurement, results and accountability. It has investigated an innovative theoretical model and process for achieving accountability based in the real-life experiences of organisations, teams and individuals. The EtE Model and Toolkit have added a methodology for organisations to critically review key aspects of their evaluation policy and practice such as stakeholder involvement. The EtE process is grounded in participatory and empowerment theory. This means that both the EtE Model and the EtE Toolkit mirror the ideals and values of these constructivist paradigms.

### **Methodological contribution**

This research has contributed to research methodology through the novel application of different methods within a broad constructivist research design. In selecting research methods for each of the empirical studies consideration was given to how each method could be used in ways that embodied the overall participatory principles of my research. For example, in Study 2 the documentary analysis, more conventionally seen as a desk exercise, was used for informing the longitudinal case study. The application of this method led to active involvement from the organisation, staff and an external peer in providing input and feedback on the process and the findings. In Study 4a the application of developmental research to inform prototype design was adapted to the production of the EtE website and Toolkit. This involved active input and feedback from practitioners representing the target audience. More significantly, the developmental process was extended into Study 4b where organisations independently field tested the EtE Toolkit. The application of the embedded case study design enabled multiple

narratives to emerge including organisational stories, team stories and an individual story. In addition, the field testing was used more conventionally to generate feedback and ideas for developing the EtE Toolkit. Finally, in Study 4b adapting narrative analysis methods more often used in the telling of crisis-type stories, to explore and record individual experience. The power of this approach suggests that there is scope for seeking ways to make this method more accessible within evaluation practice, especially where organisations seek to capture participant experience and/or for enhancing the use of case studies in evaluation.

### **Future direction for research in this line of inquiry**

The points raised through these concluding discussions suggest a number of future research directions. It is clear that organisations need to take a pragmatic approach to evaluation in a way that meets their needs, purpose, values and mission, and at the same time responds to the demands of funders. In this context there is a rich seam of research inquiry needed to explore how a more utilisation-focused evaluation approach can combine with collaborative approaches to evaluation without compromising these needs, values and demands. A particular line of inquiry might be to explore how this might be achieved through a broad stakeholder grouping including funders and organisations.

Widening perspectives and definitions of evaluator roles, especially where collaborative approaches question more conventional expectations of the evaluator for example by redefining the term ‘evaluator’ goes beyond positivist expectations of the objective external evaluator and constructivist expectations of the evaluator as facilitator, trainer and critical friend. A wider perspective suggests that the task of the ‘evaluator’ might be more democratically shared through an evaluation ‘team’. This notion raises ethical considerations such as how evaluation role-sharing is authentic and explicit for all stakeholders, and needs to be more fully explored theoretically and empirically.

In relation to evaluation capacity building theory there are gaps in knowledge about what long-term impact or success looks like especially given the complex and context specific nature of organisational evaluation. In particular, how the link is made theoretically and empirically between three levels of evaluation capacity building: the capacity to 'do' evaluation, the capacity to 'use' evaluation and the capacity to critically 'review' evaluation. Whilst recent research (Labin et al., 2012) has established the link between theoretical definitions of ECB and empirical evidence of ECB practice, further research is needed to examine the implications for ECB sustainability and the more nuanced levels identified above.

## Closing reflection

### **Tensions and benefits**

In my opening reflection I described what it was like to be a new doctoral researcher starting out. I identified two tensions, firstly the balancing of priorities between work and study, yet at the same time recognising that work (as an independent evaluator) and study were mutually enhancing. This tension has not changed and has created continuing challenges throughout my study period; yet it has proved to be a most productive learning pathway.

- My professional evaluation projects have created authentic practical evaluation experience which has informed research thinking and ideas development.
- Research methods and opportunities for new learning for example case study, development research and narrative analysis, have led to more competent design and application of evaluation methods. Research learning has informed new practices.
- Contacts, networks and links within Third Sector Organisations have provided better access to participant organisations. This informed relationship with the sector has created the potential for building the trusting relationships necessary for in depth case study research.
- Academic writing and publications have built my confidence and led to more competent project reports and generated increased credibility in evaluation projects.
- Organisations using EtE provide a source for referring other organisations to my work as a researcher and evaluator and may lead to further evaluation projects.

The second tension related to experiencing mixed emotions of enthusiasm and uncertainty. This is also a continuing tension yet the value that uncertainty creates leads to inquisitiveness to question and consider. I have also realised that engaging with these challenges does not happen by accident. As an aspiring researcher I have needed the challenge, guidance and support from supervisors to

stretch my thinking and to structure my progress. I have benefited from researcher exchange both within the University of Dundee and a wider research community. For example, the experience of attending the 'When power emerges ...' event at Strathclyde University was an opportunity to explore notions of power within social research. Participating in 'The Winding Path' research group at Edinburgh University introduced me to new narrative analysis methods. This peer exchange has stimulated new ways of thinking and directly influenced my research journey. The support of my fellow student, colleague and friend – Ros, ensured that the whole research experience did not get out of balance.

### **Scholarly endeavour and research outputs**

A new theme has also emerged which has been very productive and has been a new experience of scholarly endeavour. This has involved research learning, dissemination and presentation opportunities. Figure 17 is a time line of my research journey over six years. It highlights the consistency of supervision guiding the research journey. It shows the learning opportunities undertaken from practical research methods courses, to independent study for example into reflexivity and case study research, to researcher exchange events such as 'When power emerges ...' and the Winding Path narrative analysis group. A notable learning opportunity was participation in the University of Dundee Venture Programme. This introduced learning about product development based on research, and how to take products to market. This proved influential in my work in Study 4a. The time line also shows presentation and dissemination events such as university research fora and meetings, conference workshops and poster presentations.

# LESLEY GREENAWAY - PROF DOC TIME LINE

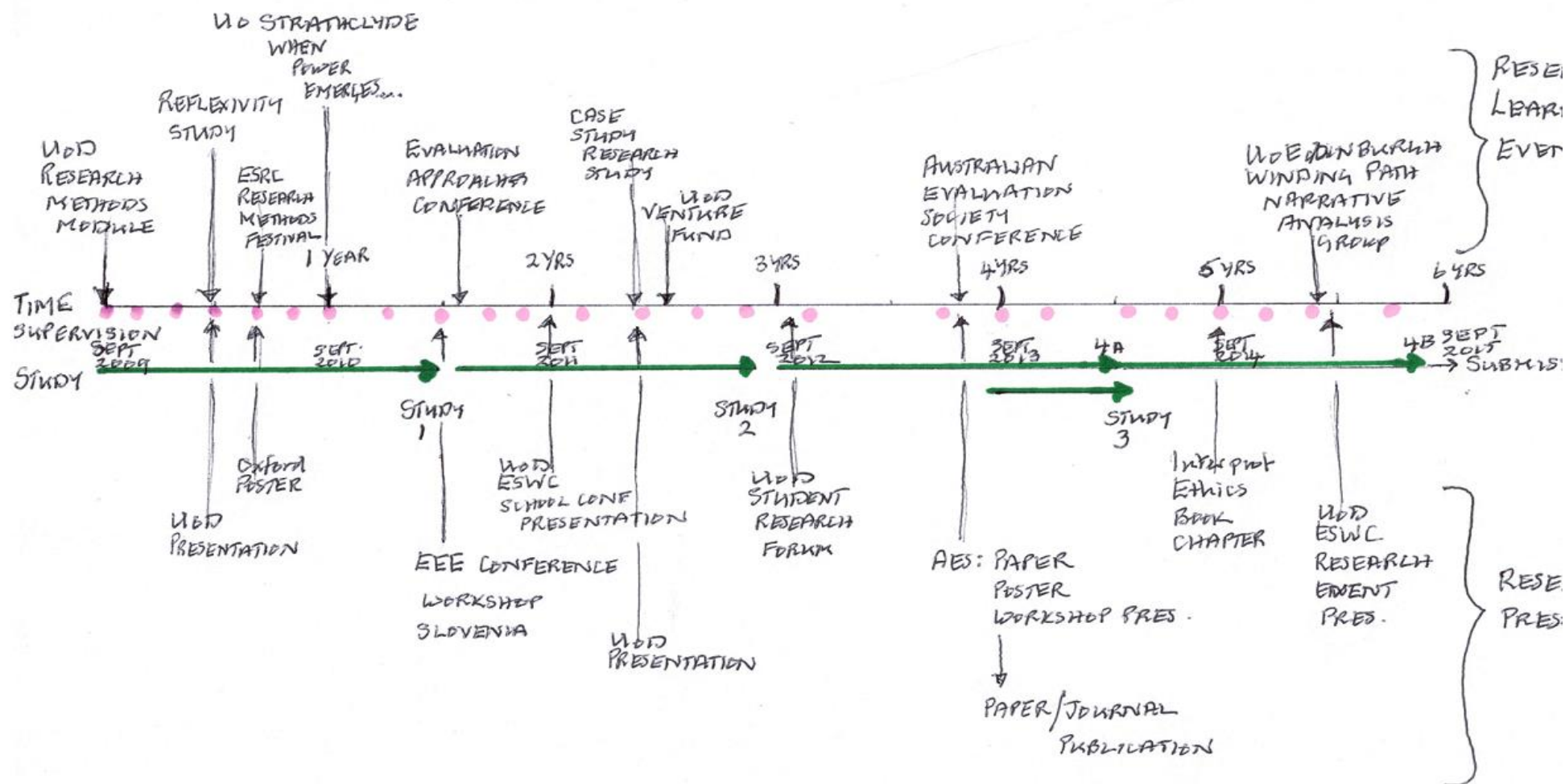


Figure 17 Professional Doctorate studies time line

A highlight was participation at the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) conference in 2013. This provided an opportunity to test my ideas within an international evaluation arena. I presented a poster (Appendix 13), lead a workshop and submitted a research paper based on Studies 1 and 2. I was awarded the inaugural Rosalind Hurworth Prize for best conference paper which was published in the AES Journal (Greenaway, 2013). Further publication was a joint chapter on the interprofessional ethics of user involvement (Greenaway & Roberts, 2014). One observation of the time line is that during the first half of my studies there was more emphasis on learning and presentations which suggests greater skills development and confidence building. During the second half of my studies there was a notable shift towards presentation, dissemination and publication. This does not mean that I was not continuing to learn, but it does suggest a progression towards scholarly endeavour. This is perhaps illustrated by the range of outputs generated through my research (Table 34).

**Table 34 Research outputs generated through doctoral studies**

Date	Research output	Title
June 2010	Research poster	Evaluation that empowers – A review of evaluation approaches that empower community organisations.
August 2013	Research poster	Evaluation that empowers – A model for generating evaluation-minded organisations.
December 2013	Journal publication	Evaluation that empowers: generating evaluation-minded organisations.
September 2014	Book chapter	The policy context: user involvement – a case study in health and community settings.
August 2014	Website	<a href="http://www.evaluationthatempowers.com">www.evaluationthatempowers.com</a>
September 2014	Practical evaluation resource	EtE Evaluative Toolkit (v2)

### **What would I do differently?**

Firstly, I would aim to create a more effective and efficient space and time for my research. It has been difficult to put down and then pick up my research as it has fitted into my work schedule. In the future I would hope to have a better and more financially supported arrangement to enable more concentrated research time. In addition, it has been a long research journey but one that has contributed to my maturation as a doctoral researcher, but in the future a shorter time span would add more immediacy to my studies.

Given the deep and rich nature of the case study approach that I have used, in future I would like to widen and re-balance the scope of my research to ensure that I included other contexts and other stakeholder perspectives, for example exploring a wider application of the EtE Model and Toolkit beyond a Scottish context in the UK, Europe and more globally. This would test its validity in a wider evaluation setting and also provide insights into the culture, policy and practice of evaluation elsewhere in the world. In addition, I would have liked to include a second iteration of the EtE conversation within the case study organisations in order to get a fuller perspective on how the EtE process might change and develop, and to expose further issues of sustainability.

Finally, I would also want to prioritise participant and stakeholder perspectives over the outputs and outcomes of my research. This is about the challenge from trying to follow a number of different narratives: the participants in each of the studies, the development of the EtE Model and Toolkit and my development as a doctoral researcher. In the future I can see a value in giving more attention to mapping the lived experiences of evaluation from different participant perspectives.

### **What next?**

Following completion of my research my focus will be on dissemination. I intend to extend my range of publications through journal articles and a potential EtE practice handbook. This also provides the potential for conference presentations and workshops. I have an outstanding commitment to revisit the AES Conference to share the outcomes from my research. I would like to take the EtE Toolkit to market, and I am keen to go further with narrative analysis methods especially



exploring how they can be used more pragmatically within evaluation projects to capture personal experience and voice.

### Looking back/looking forward

I end this reflection with another 'I' poem. It is based on the diary recordings that I made during the first half of my doctoral studies and my final thoughts on the last stages of writing my thesis.

#### One year in ...

07/10/2010

*I feel more confident*

*I feel more clear about  
my research, my  
direction and my plans*

*I am starting to 'see'  
and 'think' differently  
but ...*

*I am still grappling  
with critique*

*I am enjoying the  
complexity of my topic – what's inside?*



**Figure 18 Reflective journal – I am enjoying the complexity of my topic – what's inside?**

#### Moving on

01/12/2010

*Finally ...*

*I have really begun my doctoral studies*

*I submit my first 'piece' (my literature review) and ...*

*It feels good and ...*

*It feels like a different place to be.*

**What happened next?**

28/02/2011

*After feedback ...*

*I took a decision to radically review my literature review*

*I knew I needed to crack the structure and format*

*I am good at the personal stuff but ...*

*I needed to strip this out to see what was left*

*I did this*

*I went back into to my reading, AND*

*I did not lose the personal angle*

*I just included it better*

*I am very pleased with the result – a much more solid piece of work*

*I have benefited from a period of ‘study leave’*

*I have been focused but now ...*

*I need to get back to work!*

**Theory building**

26/10/2011

*I have been influenced by the notion of theory building (Professor Tim Kelly)*

*Using theory to guide research ↔ using research to develop theory.*

*I wonder how this relates to my research?*

*Evaluation that Empowers*

*Role of process actions within organisations?*

*An ‘iceberg’ metaphor*

*Accountability as a key driver*

*Are there/what are different ways to be accountable?*

*The significance of ‘voice’ – for feedback, for informing, for influencing.*

How are different voices expressed?

Dilemma – where does the balance lie between action and process?

What if it is unbalanced?

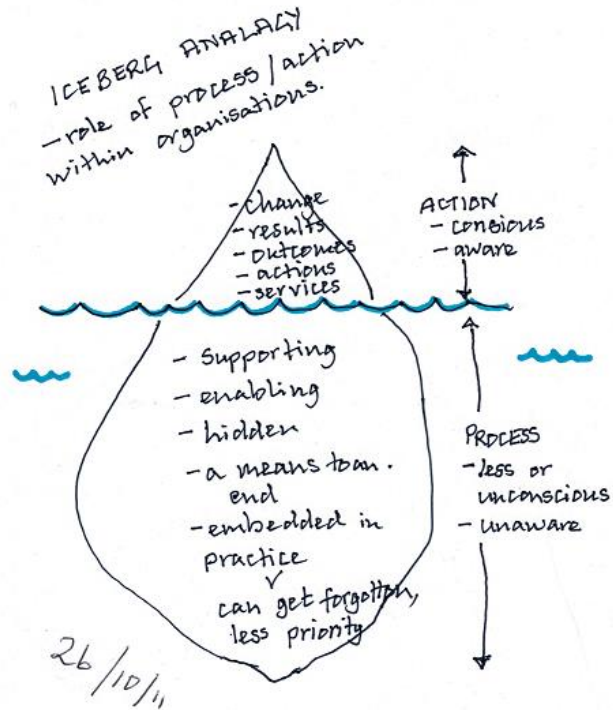


Figure 19 Reflective journal – Iceberg metaphor

**An antipodean experience ...**

04/09/2013

*I came to this conference as part of my doctoral research journey*

*I had some clear expectations*

*I wanted to explore*

*I expected a different evaluation culture*

*I was not disappointed*

*I found a rich space for critical peer discussion (without feeling defensive).*

**Towards the end ...**

25/11/2014

*I am very excited about constructing my contents page*

*I am enthusiastic to be pulling the whole story together*

*My goal is for my thesis to create a narrative: about my research topic and about my journey as a developing researcher.*

*I realise there is still a long way to go! Working on the flow, connecting the different studies and filling the gaps*

*I am disappointed and critical about some of my early work*

*Or, does this show how far I have developed?*

**In the end ...**

November 2015

*I am approaching the end*

*I am very focused – very intense*

*But it always comes back to the work/study or study/work balance (or challenge)*

*I submit my final draft thesis – breathe 😊*

*What next?*

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